

PC ZONE

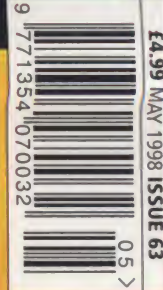
www.pczone.co.uk

YOUR INDISPENSABLE GUIDE TO PC GAMES!

TIBERIAN SUN

Have Westwood blown it?

PLUS: We round up all the best C&C-style games and predict the Christmas winners



EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

INCOMING

It's the best-looking action game we've ever seen!

VOODOO 2
Is it worth
splashing out
£200 for a new
3D card?

Where the hell is UNREAL?

Jay Wilbur makes his excuses

KLINGON HONOR GUARD

Taking *Star Trek* to the next generation

SPEC OPS: RANGERS ASSAULT

Tomb Raider meets *Command & Conquer*

PLUS!

IF YOUR COVERMOUNT IS MISSING PLEASE CONSULT YOUR NEWSAGENT

- Starship Titanic • M1 Tank Platoon II • Grim Fandango
- Red Baron 2 • Part 2 of Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee guide

DEATH OF A GENRE

Is the game up
for adventure
games?



REAL

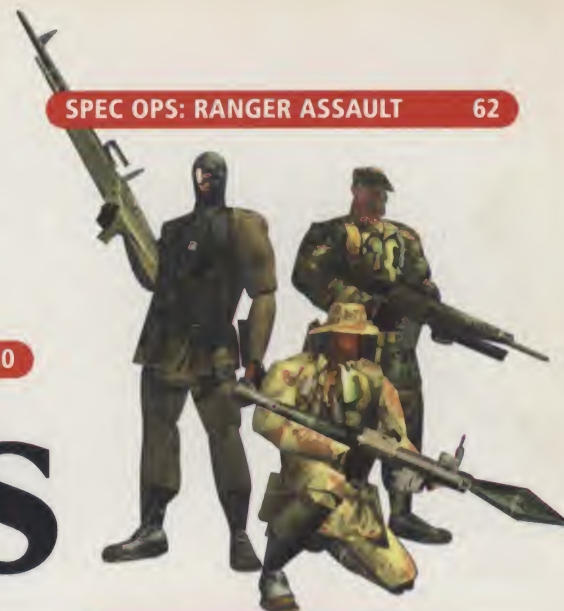




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Whatever happened to the likes of *Cruise For A Corpse* and *The Hobbit*? Is the adventure dead and buried or is there a brave new future dawning? Paul Presley and Chris Anderson don their leather armour and go in search of the truth.





Incoming

Turn to page 74 for our EXCLUSIVE review of the best-looking game ever to grace the humble PC. Does it play as good as it looks, or is it another case of 3Dfx enhanced style over content?

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**PC
ZONE**

19 Bolsover St,
London W1P 7HJ

Tel: 0171 631 1433
Fax: 0171 436 1321
CompuServe: 100142, 2152
CIX: pczone@CIX.co.uk
Website: www.pczone.co.uk

Editor in Chief

Mark Higham 0171 917 5738

Editor

Jeremy Wells 0171 917 3864

Deputy Editor

Chris Anderson 0171 917 3901

News Editor

Paul Mallinson 0171 917 3830

Staff Writer

Richie Shoemaker 0171 917 5675

Art Editor

Wag 0171 917 3911

Senior Production Editor

Paul Henderson 0171 917 5676

Production Editor

Thea Marcuard 0171 917 3914

CD and EPU Editor

Daniel Emery 0171 917 7689

CD Producer

Gareth Ramsey 0171 917 7646

Disk Editor

Marcus Pullen 0171 917 3857

Reader Services

Alex Taylor

Contributors

David McCormack, Tim MacDonald (Design)

Charlie Brooker, Jamie Cunningham, Steve Hill,

Steve Jackson, Joe Lampard, David McCandless,

Patrick McCarthy, Andy Martin, Paul Presley,

Paul Rose, Andrew Wright

Tim Ponting 0171 917 7666

Group Publisher

Subscriptions Hotline

01454 620070 - cihotline@aol.com

Back Issues

01789 490215

Advertising Manager

Mike Shepherd 0171 917 3873

Senior Sales Executive

Emma Lewis 0171 917 7708

Group Ad Manager

Warren Wooldridge 0171 917 7621

Production Manager

Sarah Hedley 0171 917 3890

Account Handler

Julia Smith 0171 917 3957

Advertising Production

Sharon Drumm 0171 917 3937

Marketing Manager

Cheryl Harner 0171 917 7802

Lit Rental Executive

Nerys Church 0171 917 5663

Lit Rental Executive

Simon McCay 0171 917 3943

Origination

Colour-Tech Graphics Ltd 0171 729 3934

Printed in England

by ET Heron

Newstrade Manager

James Burnay 0171 917 7810

Distribution

Seymour Distribution

Mail Order Manager

Sarah Burton 0171 917 7807

Publishing Director

Bruce Sawford 0171 917 5538

Circulation Director

Sean Farmer 0171 917 7654

Marketing Director

Alison Townsend 0171 917 7675

Non-Executive Director

Dick Pountain

Financial Director

Ian Leggett 0171 917 7679

Managing Director

Alistair Ramsay 0171 917 7661

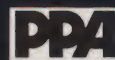
Chairman

Felix Dennis



TIPS LINE: 0171 917 7698
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FORSAKEN

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On the disc

This month we've compiled the latest and very best playable demos, patches and updates for your delectation. We've got exclusive playable demos of the awesome *Longbow 2*, and a ground-breaking Rambo 'em up known as *Spec Ops: Ranger Assault*, as well as *Heavy Gear*, *Die By The Sword*, *Actua Golf 2* and *Andretti Racing*. If you're a fan of *Championship Manager*, may we point you in the direction of the patches section, where you'll find two patches that will update your files to include the latest transfers and signings. We've also got four all-new levels for the original *Tomb Raider* and a whole bunch of Wireplay stuff. Enjoy...



MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

You'll need at least a Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.

Many of the programs are designed to run under Windows 95 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.

Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are Windows 95, DOS and 3D accelerator only.

Help!

CD trouble? HD playing up? Don't worry - phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

HD DISK HELP

Phone Matthew on 01274 736990

Any weekday between 9am and 4pm

CD-ROM HELP

Phone ABT on 01708 250250 or

pczone@abt-net.demon.co.uk

Any weekday between 11am and 5pm

(Please DO NOT phone the PC Zone office as your calls will NOT be answered)

If you are calling either helpline, then please take note of the following points:

- If possible have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information ie system type, sound card, RAM etc, plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call to jot down the relevant info.

No CD?

If you don't have the CD issue, then fear not! Simply fill out this slip, enclose your HDs from the cover plus a cheque for a whole £1 and send it to:

CD Exchange (63), PC Zone, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ

Your details (please print clearly)

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Please make cheques payable to:

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CDs from previous issues are also available.

Longbow 2 (Electronic Arts)

EXCLUSIVE!



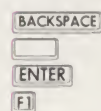
IT'S BEEN A LONG AND ARDUOUS wait for the 'try before you buy' brigade. People have even been camping outside the Zone offices, wagons circled in anticipation for their beloved *Longbow 2* demo. Has the wait been worth it? Do we just make up the scores, or do we judge each game in respect of its merits? Who the hell knows. Just try this instant-action mission where a group of US tanks are being attacked by Russian forces. The controls have been set up

in simple mode; to change, go to the options menu.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard/joystick



Cyclic roll and pitch
Tail rotor left/right
Increase/decrease collective
Cycle weapons
Fire
Fire cannon
Front cockpit view



F4

T

H

CTRL - Z

A

ALT - X

Enable virtual cockpit
Select next target
Auto hover
Cycle time of day
Enable autopilot
Exit demo



SPEC OPS: RANGER ASSAULT (BMG)

SPEC OPS: THE ONLY GAME where you get to control two men who roll around in the mud together – at night. This one-level demo is a brilliant showcase for the final version which promises full multi-player support. Select your two-man squad and go blow yourself a Russian base. This game is all about covert operations, which basically means that if you fart, they'll smell it. Oh, and by the way, it's 3Dfx only – sorry.

Controls: Keyboard

CTRL	Fire weapon
[]	Throw frag grenade
X	Sniper mode
[←][→][↑][↓]	Move Ranger
SHIFT + [←][→][↑][↓]	Low crawl, walk, CQB, accelerate sniper, fine turn
ESC	Pause, options
ALT + [←][→][↑][↓]	Strafing, roll
[1][2]	Previous/Next Inventory
ENTER	Use inventory Item

EXCLUSIVE!



[I]/[J] + X	Sniper scope inventory
A/Z	Get up/down
R	Reload weapon
G	GPS
N	Night-vision goggles
H	Health
TAB	Switch Rangers

H + ENTER	Medkit shortcut
T	Training mode
END	Hold up!
HOME	Follow me!
DELETE	Fire them up!
SPACE	Move up!
1-8	Weapon select
F1	Help screen
F4	Orbit camera
F5	Default camera
F6	Side cameras
F7	Overhead camera
F8	First-person camera



HEAVY GEAR (Activision)

Essentially, *Heavy Gear* is Activision's third *Mech* game in all but name. The Gears are smaller and more manoeuvrable than their predecessors, but they look like they've come straight out of an episode of *Power Rangers*. Two full missions are available for owners of Direct3D accelerator cards. Two control modes are available; we suggest you play using the mouse.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

[←][→][↑][↓]	Aim/move
1-O	Throttle
[]	Fire
ENTER	Next weapon
E	Target enemy
CTRL-Q	Quit
S	Stand up

BACKSPACE	Reverse
[←][→]	Torso left/right
[←][→]	Torso re-centre
W	Wheels (throttle <5)
SHIFT + [←][→]	Strafe
TAB	Crouch
P	Pick up/drop



DIE BY THE SWORD (Interplay)

Anyone who plays *Quake* with a mouse/key control combo might well feel at home with Interplay's latest hack 'em up, save for the fact that the mouse controls your sword arm. This new control method certainly takes some getting used to, so the keys have been set up for arcade mode. To get the most from the games may we suggest that you scan through the readme file and train your way through the tutorial.

Once you're familiar with the mouse swinging, jump into the arena and start hacking.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

A/D	Turn left/right
W/S	Move forward/back
A D W S	(Press twice) Lunge
Q/E	Step left/right
[]	Jump (hit twice to flip)
CAPS LOCK	Crouch
F9	Pause game
ESC	Exit demo
1-3	(Numeric keypad) Block
4	Overhead attack
5	Waist slash
6	Shoulder slash
7	Special attack #1
8	Special attack #2
9	Special attack #3
.	Toggle health bar
.	Bodily damage indicator
/	Sheath sword
.	Action key (pull lever, pick up item)
1-3	Camera views
R/F	Zoom in/out



ACTUA GOLF 2 (Gremlin)

We've got two golf games for you on this month's disc. While the other is probably a little more 'innovative,' this one is slightly the better-looking of the two. Play one hole from the world-famous (never heard of it) Kiawah Island Ocean course.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

ALT	Menus
[←][→]	Move arc left/right
[↑][↓]	Increase/decrease arc length
SHIFT + [←][→]	Fade/draw
T	Take shot mode
ENTER	Start/stop swing/hit ball
CTRL + [←][→][↑][↓]	View movement
1	Camera select
2	Ball cameras
3	Club set-up
4	Options
5	GFX options
6	Set wind strength and direction on the driving range
7	Score card (if available)
8	Current hole status
9	Current leader board (if available)
Q	Main menu



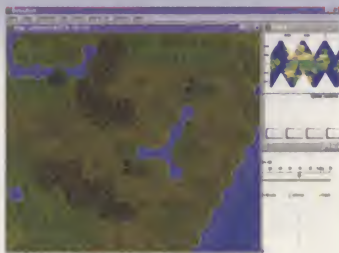
ANDRETTI RACING (EA Sports)

Against the likes of Ubi Soft's *F1 Racing Simulation* and Psygnosis' *F1 '97*, *Andretti* never really stood a chance. Still, here's a superb demo featuring two tracks where you can race against the man himself and even tinker about with the cars. Enjoy (if you've got a 3Dfx card, that is).

Controls: Keyboard/joystick/wheel

A/Z	Accelerate/brake
[←][→]	Steering
V	Change view
G/J	Look

H Look behind
W/Q Shift up/down
P Pause



EVOLUTION

(Discovery Communications)

Yet another game that'll get religious fundamentalists crying into their daily bread. The idea behind this strategy game is basically to become more intelligent by eating. It's a philosophical real-time eat 'em up and it's strangely compelling.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

Pause
Zoom out
Zoom in
Find
Load game
New map view
New game
Save game
Exit
Help

F6 Tree of life
F7 Bestiary
Feeding Radii in the active map, view change
Deselect
Centre on creature
Track creature
Species information
Evolution information
Creature list



LAST BRONX (Sega)

Beating people about the head with sticks is hardly the friendliest of pastimes, which is why it's only acceptable in smoky arcades and parts of Glasgow. With the PC starved of decent slapping games of late it's with welcome relief that we bring you the latest from console past-masters Sega. Gladiators, are you ready?

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

W S A D Player 1 movement

Player 2 movement
Guard, punch, kick (P1)
Guard, punch, kick (P2)
Help
Pause
Settings
Key assign



SKI RACING (Cendant)

Why spend hundreds of pounds on 'real' skiing when you can get the same thrills by playing this demo? Yep, you'll probably end up falling off your chair and breaking your legs at the staggering realism as the wind buffets your ruddy cheeks. This is as real as it gets.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

Tuck
Stand
Turn left/right
Jump
Pre-jump
Edge
Skate
Next camera



ODD WORLD: ABE'S ODDYSEE (GT Interactive)

Quite the most infuriatingly addictive platform game since *Jet Set Willy* on the old Spectrum. This demo introduces you to our flatulent hero at the beginning of his adventure to free his fellow mudokons. Save as many as you can by chanting them through the portals.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

Movement
Run
Action
Sneak
Jump
Throw
Crouch
Gamespeak



WARBREEDS

(Red Orb Entertainment)

Red Orb's genetically influenced real-time strategy game earned a highly respectable score a couple of issues ago, which is why we've got a new version of the old demo for you to mess about with.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

Toggle main menu
Fast scroll/select multiple units
Hold down to keep unit formation while moving units
Auto-target closest enemy
Flash ID colours
Zoom in/out
Select all units in view window
Stop current unit/s
Next unit
Toggle mini-map
Toggle follow-lock mode
Toggle power zone viewing mode
Centre current selection
Hold down to set waypoints

HD ZONE

INSURRECTION

(Trapezoid Entertainment)

This game has been more than two years in development – not that it's evident in the graphics, mind. The chap behind it has done the whole thing from scratch, and even though the game looks a bit pants it holds together pretty well. Comparable to an early *Ultima* adventure, there are also elements of *Final Fantasy* in there as well. The guy responsible for it (bravely, we think) is keen to receive feedback, be it good or bad. His website can be found at www.cs.colostate.edu/~day. Be nice now.

Controls: Keyboard

Movement and cursor control
Exit program
Use item on either the map, inventory or combat
Get item
Toggle overhead



map display
Open inventory
Talk
Cast a spell on either the map or in combat
Attack in combat
Cancel most stuff
Save game
Load game

JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER

(Eidos Interactive)

This new version of Eidos' classic flight sim now sports an excellent multi-player level as well as a new single-player mission. Take to the skies and see what you think. Oh and try crashing without the undercarriage down – it won't work.

Control: Joystick/keyboard

Menu
Pitch & roll
Rudder
Toggle hatch
Toggle flaps
Airbrake
Toggle landing gear
Thrust





Against our advice
Mr Holman bought a real dog.

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CONTROL

0-9

Assign teams to current selected units

0-9

Select team 0-9

CONTROL X

Explore map

CONTROL

ALT K

Die die die

H

Set horizontal line formation

V

Set vertical line formation

7/8

Diagonal formation

1/2

Rotate selection 90°

CONTROL

F1-F8

Save formation

F1-F8

Use saved formation

Y

Options



REAL GOLF (Shareware)

Ever wondered why there hasn't been a golf game where you can clamber into a golfing cart and drive to the next hole? Play this time-limited demo for the definitive answer.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

Mouse	Swing club
LMB	Recentre club
RMB	Leave ball
F1-F12	Select club
↑/↓	Change view
←/→	Change aim
CTRL-Z	Toggle putting grid
CTRL-H	Help



SWARM (Reflexive Entertainment)

Here's an interesting take on the Asteroids idea that brings in a mighty intuitive control method. The mouse controls both heading and speed while the buttons fire the weapons. Not bad at all.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

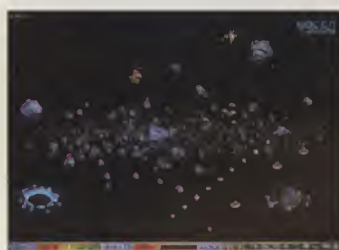
Mouse	Direction and thrust
LMB, <input type="checkbox"/>	Fire 1
RMB, L <input type="checkbox"/>	Fire 2
Z/A	Cycle weapon 1
X/S	Cycle weapon 2



SIM SAFARI (EA/Maxis)

No, unfortunately this isn't a shoot 'em up where you get to upset the delicate balance of nature, rather it's a resource management sim that you foist upon your kids to stop them snapping at your ankles.

Controls: Mouse



JUGGERNAUT CORPS

(Shepherd's Worlds)

Another Asteroids game for all those people grieving wantonly over the death of the Eighties. Our advice: buy yourself some burgundy loafers and get over it.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

↑/↓	Forward/backward thrust
←/→	Rotate
B	Hyper-brake
Z/X	Left/right thrust
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire
0-9	Select weapon
W	Toggle weapons

PATCHES

IF YOU GO ON another mouse pointing excursion through the /patches directory you'll find loads upon loads of the latest updates, bug fixes and patches for all your favourite games. Cast your eyes down this list

Andretti Racing

(Glide support for 3Dfx)

Armor Command (1.02)

CM2 97/98 'Official Patch' (Bug fix

and transfer update UK version)

CM2 96/97, 97/98 'Unofficial

Patch' (World data and UK data

updates)

Chasm (1.04 Update, modem patch

with new levels etc)

Dark Reign (v1.2)

Deadlock 2 (v1.11 AI patch)

Die By The Sword (Cyrix patch)

F-22 (v1.1)

F/A-18 Korea (v1.02 beta)

Ski Pacing (v1.2)

Gettysburg (patch 3)

Great Battles Of Hannibal (v1.1)

International Rally Championship

(v4.68)

Joint Strike Fighter (Voodoo2 beta)

Joint Strike Fighter (v1.11)

Longbow 2 (Direct3D beta)

Montezuma's Revenge (v1.20)

NASCAR 2 (3Dfx beta)

NBA Action '98 (v1.1)

NHL '98 (patch)

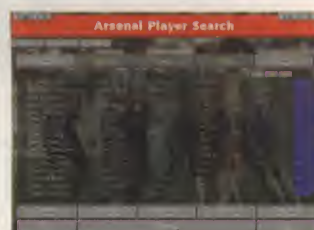
Quake II (H3D Patch)

Quake II (3.14 point release)

Tomb Raider Gold

(Power VR patch)

Worms 2 (patch 1)



FROM EIDOS... WITH LOVE

IF YOU'RE THE PROUD OWNER OF the original Tomb Raider and have been tempted to go out and buy the new *Unfinished Business* budget release for those extra four levels, don't bother – it's all here. Just unzip the files to your Tomb Raider directory and run the tombub.exe file, making sure the original CD is in its proper place.

Championship Manager 2 fans have also got a treat. In your /patches directory you'll find both official and unofficial updates for your favourite footie management game. Within each zip file is the relevant readme instruction on how to bring the game bang up to date.





INTERCEPTOR



BLAST INTO A NEW
STRATEGIC DIMENSION
SUMMER '98

MICROPROSE
www.microprose.com

CD-ROM

WIREPLAY



Wireplay

The games network from BT

SETTLE THOSE REGIONAL differences with a spot of deathmatching the Wireplay way. From the rice paddies of Grimsby to the olive groves of Truro, people up and down this fair land of ours can dial in to mercilessly slay one another on-line.

But wait, what's with all this churlish laughter. Wireplay? "Crap," you cry. "Nonsense," we shout back in unison. Okay so Wireplay was a bit troublesome in the early stages, but they've gotten over it now. Since employing an army of Umpa-lumpas, things have improved considerably; and anyway, they've now added *Quake II* to their growing list of catered-for classic games.

Er... what do I do now?

First of all install the software. Double-click on the Wireplay icon and follow the on-screen instructions. If you've already got the Wireplay client software installed then you may want to put the QuakeWorld software on your machine. This is required to run both *Quake I* and *II* through the Wireplay service.

And the other stuff?

Oh, they're just maps and stuff. You'll need them if you want to enjoy everything that on-line *Quake* has to offer while avoiding horrendously slow download times. Each icon represents a self-extracting file that will place the maps in the correct directory. Check to make sure the *Quake I/Quake II* directories are correct though.

What's next?

Log in, hand over your most personal information to a faceless computer and, all being well, you should be able to enjoy the thrill of watching once respected members of the population turn into frenzied sociopaths.



LEST WE FORGET

IF YOU'RE HAVING PROBLEMS getting the software working, don't call us, call Wireplay. They have their own dedicated helpline. While we at *PC Zone* are quite knowledgeable when it comes to games, we have no idea when it comes to technical stuff. (It's all done with bits of string.)

Wireplay Helpline:
0345 577577

Freephone:
0800 800 918
for Wireplay Hotline

www.wireplay.com

AGE OF EMPIRES

A recent addition to the Wireplay stable is *Zone's* (well, *Chris's*) favourite strategy game, *Age Of Empires*. You'll find an enhanced demo version on this month's disc that has been optimised to run on the Wireplay service. Install the game as normal. To get it to run on Wireplay, just specify the installation path within the Wireplay set-up screen.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

[]	View selected units
CTRL + H	Select and view town centre
CTRL + B	View barracks
CTRL + D	Dock
CTRL + A	Archery range
CTRL + K	Siege workshop
CTRL + L	Stable
CTRL + P	Temple
CTRL + Y	Academy
L	Unload transport vessel
+ / -	Increase/decrease game speed
DELETE	Delete military unit or building
E S C	Unselect or cancel
ENTER	Send chat message
↑ ↓ ← →	Scroll game view
CTRL + 1 - 9	Assign group number to units
1 - 9	Select group assigned to this number
ALT + 1 - 9	Select and view group assigned to this number
SHIFT + 1 - 9	Select this group in addition to currently selected units
TAB	If multiple units are selected,

display next unit in lower-left status box

SHIFT + TAB

If multiple units are selected, display previous unit in lower-left status box

F3 PAUSE

Pause

F4

Score display

F10

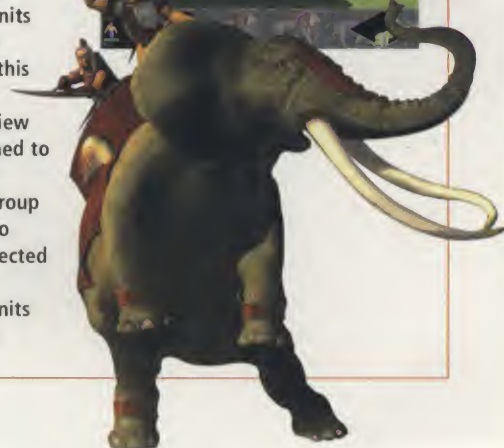
Game menu

F1

Help

SHIFT + F1

In-game help



SAY GOOD-BYE TO YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

the Quake II Mission Pack: The Reckoning™.
15 never-before-seen levels to scour. added weapons to wield.
and fresh foes to defeat.
you won't want to be disturbed by anything else.

experience bioluminescent life forms, stalagmites and stalactites and other breathtaking environments.

virtually undetectable,
gekks are lightning-fast creatures that will hunt you
down, leaping from the shadows
to claw or bite. even their acidic blood is deadly.

the trap sucks nearby enemies inside and turns them
into food cubes for player consumption.



YOU WON'T BE SEEING THEM FOR A WHILE.


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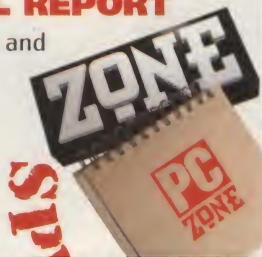
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BULLETIN

SPECIAL REPORT

Make games and earn big bucks.

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SPECIAL REPORT

PC Zone investigates the link between games and films.

PAGE 26



THE MAN WHO KNOWS

An informed view from the shadows.

PAGE 28



Ritual sin again

Ritual Entertainment were recently overheard discussing mission packs and a sequel to their forthcoming blasterama

DATA PAD

We ain't ever gonna be Expendable



(Above) Looks like someone's just spilt their coffee... (Top right) *Expendable* currently sports a third-person view. (Above) Destroy the fork-lift truck bay. Destroy it!

Impressive new screenshots from Rage Software's forthcoming game, *Expendable*.

Rage Software have unveiled a brand new, top-secret shoot 'em up project called *Expendable*, a game which they are hoping to publish themselves before the end of 1998.

This third-person action game looks likely to make something of an impression when it is released in November, with *Commando*-like gameplay that crosses a *Tomb Raider*-esque viewpoint with a *Quake*-inspired interface. Using yet another of their proprietary 3D engines, Rage are this time relying on their Newcastle arm to handle all the coding and visuals (*Incoming* was coded at their Liverpool HQ, and *Hostile Waters* is currently being worked on in Birmingham), and after only a few months work they do indeed look set to do them proud.

Explosions. Destruction. "Fighting the nation with

their guns and ammunition..." Abandoned vehicles which can be used and driven (handy for running over whole platoons of enemy soldiers). Even more explosions. Tracer fire. Underground bases filled with booby traps. Radiation areas with deadly time-limit races. More huge explosions. So many explosions that your average player will need nothing short of a fully souped-up 3Dfx PC.

Weapons and gameplay-wise, much is still on the drawing board, but devastating fiery grenade launchers (at the moment called Napalm Rings) are likely to remain in the game for the entirety of

development, such is their visual impact. Plans are for a fully scripted single-player campaign, and finely-honed multi-player facilities too. Watch out for regular updates in *PC Zone*. **Z**



Rage set off another 'virtual fireworks display' in *Expendable* – out Christmas '98.

SiN, even though we're still holding ground for a review copy of their first full effort (due next issue, we're assured). The first *SiN* mission pack, currently untitled and most likely to

come out through Activision, is pencilled in for a summer '98 release from Ritual. The Texas-based development studio is also responsible for what is considered to be the best add-on pack for the iD's

original *Quake*, *Scourge Of Armagon*, are also talking to a number of other developers about possible co-development deals as well. *SiN*'s shelf life is almost certain to be given a boost

by this. On top of this, *SiN 2* is being touted for an early 1999 release. Apparently, early development has begun at Ritual. As Blur say: woo-hoo! More news as and when we get it.



More Lands of Lore

You know, we can't quite believe it - a third *Lands Of Lore* before the end of the year?!



LOL III is unlikely to look drastically different to the excellent second game. Expect some enhancements though.

Having made us wait five years for *Lands Of Lore II*, Westwood have been relatively quick to announce the third instalment. Due for release in October this year (! - Ed), *LOL III* sees you in the role of a king who loses his soul. The aim of the game being to get it back, banish the creatures who stole it, and restore the kingdom to harmony. To do this you must meet the

challenges of five worlds, with settings that include everything from urban sprawl to frozen wasteland.

"The story is one of the most important parts of any game," says Westwood VP Louis Castle. "In *Lands of Lore III*, we're focusing on plot to bind the gameplay and visuals together." The engine behind the game has also been stripped down, tuned up and rebuilt. It's now able to push advanced lighting, voxel textures and animation around the screen without breaking into a sweat. **Z**

SimCity 3000 back on

The *SimCity 3000* build-up continues, although the acquisition of Maxis by EA may explain why it went very quiet over the winter months of '97/'98. Now back on for a September release, the future of *SimCity 3000* has been subject to much speculation during Maxis' recent take-over. Reports that this new instalment will introduce new forms of industry (including mining, logging and fishing), plus blatant product placement and recognisable brand names are as yet unconfirmed, although *PC Zone* is hoping to see playable code any day now which we hope will confirm or scotch these rumours. There are some new screenshots available (as you can see here) which show that the main part of the game remains pretty much 2D in appearance. Maxis are still inviting suggestions for the game at www.maxis.com, so there's obviously some way to go yet before it's finished. **Z**



(Above) Zoom in for a closer look. (Right) Battersea power station! (Far right) A bustling city.



Quake III already

John Carmack, head honcho and lead programmer at iD Software, this month dropped a big spanner into the huge industrial works that is the 3D shoot 'em up market when he announced that iD will soon release *Quake III* - a mere five months after delivering the spooge-worthy *Quake II*.

A planned mission pack (in the style of the excellent *Scourge Of Armagon* for *Quake*) is going to be souped up to become an entirely new game. "We're merging together a completely new graphics engine with the *Quake II* game/client/server framework, giving us *Quake III*," announced Carmack in his on-line journal or plan file (www.quakefinger.com).

No word yet on the concept, plot or direction of *Q III* other than that the game will definitely, 100 per cent only support 3D accelerator cards. That means those poor, literally impoverished people still without a juicy 3Dfx or Voodoo chipset in their games-playing workstation will be unable to play the new game.

The justification for such a drubbing of 'software'? *Q III* is apparently intended to bridge the gap between the current *Quake* technology and iD's next engine - *Trinity*.

Expectations are that the release is likely to be *Quake II.5* rather than a fully fledged all-new incarnation. Industry experts (ie us) reckon the renaming ceremony and the imminent arrivals of a squadron of *Quake II*-based games are not entirely unconnected. iD have publicly voiced their desire to "get away" from the rest of the field. As John Carmack said in a recent *Wired* interview: "After *Quake II* we're going to wash our hands of it. We're on to other things. Let everyone else fight it out over content." The newly christened mission pack may be an attempt to distance themselves from the slew of *Quake*-engine games, for both pride and marketing reasons.

But then who cares? The more the merrier, we say. Roll on the summer of shoot 'em ups. **Z**



(Top left) *Quake* broke new ground in 1996. (Top right) *Quake II* broke new ground in 1997. (Above) Will *Quake III* do the same? NB: the above screenshot is purely speculative. **P**

Virtual Pool for DVD

Interplay may bring their forthcoming DVD version of *Virtual Pool 2* to the UK, even though there won't be much demand for it

DATAPAD

initially. DVD has yet to make an impact here or in the US, even though technology experts once hailed it as the 'be-all and end-all' storage medium for the future. It's hard to see what Interplay can add to *Virtual Pool 2*, but if they

do release the DVD version over here, it will almost certainly be a showcase title for the system. That said, with DVD drives still priced quite highly, we may need something bigger to persuade us to part with our hard-earned cash.



All new Championship Manager 3 for the new season

The Collyer brothers have just revealed further details regarding the sequel to their best-selling football management simulation *Championship Manager 2*.

Although they're playing things very close to their chest, the Collyers have revealed a few juicy titbits. Firstly, different countries' leagues will be included within one game so that managers will be able to accept jobs in different countries, and many of the World's top leagues will be supported, including most European leagues as well as those in USA, Argentina, Japan and Brazil. The brothers have also intimated that due to the open-ended structure of the game more leagues will be supported at a later date. Despite there being many more ratings, hidden ratings, nations, teams, officials, players and managers than before, the new game should run a lot quicker than *CM2* thanks to a completely revamped game engine. Although minimum specifications are yet to be revealed, as before

players will be able to select to run less leagues in order to run the game on a less powerful machine.

A whole new tactical system and match simulation is promised that will allow the player unprecedented control over his team's tactics through a combination of individual player and overall team instructions. As before, there will be many pre-set formations and individual player tactics that the player can choose from, though now managers will be able to instruct players



The game will be researched and translated by football fans from around the world.



A totally new tactical system and match simulation will be introduced. The user will have total control over his team's tactics through a combination of individual player and overall team instructions.

to mark certain players, and there's the promise of even greater tactical wizardry. Managers will also be able to train their squad and assign different coaches to different areas of training such as technique, fitness, goalscoring and formation to help improve individual and overall performance. Coaches will report on players' progress during training sessions and there's also talk of 'B' teams and Youth Squads.

As in the original release, you'll be able to send scouts out to watch specific players that you've got your eye on, and newspaper reports will keep you abreast of the latest transfer rumours. The *CM2* user interface is being improved to make it more intuitive and easier to use; it will also make use of a higher resolution, short-cut keys and loads more relevant photos from all around the world.

Just in case it all sounds too daunting, there are plans to include an assistant manager who will be available to take on certain management tasks if (like Ruud Gullit) you feel you have too much work to do. Rumours that you'll be able to include your own name on the team sheet, launch your own clothing line, make heaps of cash putting your name to numerous lucrative sponsorship deals and make regular TV appearances are as yet unfounded, though an independent developer based in the Fulham Broadway area is looking into releasing a patch disc for Chelsea fans. Sorry. That last bit was an absolute lie.

Championship Manager 3 will be published by Eidos Interactive. Point your browsers at <http://www.compulink.co.uk/~champman/welcome.htm> for more information.



The amount of interaction between the manager and his chairman, staff, players, supporters and media will be greatly increased.

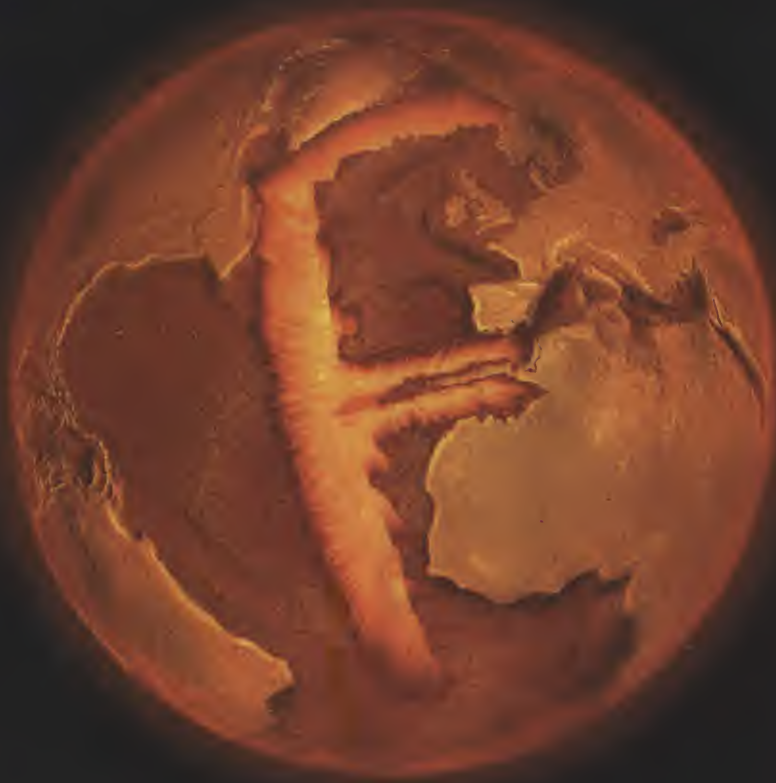
Re-lifting the chopper

MicroProse recently let slip that they are planning to release an updated version of Dan Gorlin's 1982 classic *Choplifter* for the PC and consoles, although it's unlikely we'll see anything playable until later in the year. Gorlin himself – now at the helm of his own development studio, Ariok Entertainment – will oversee the project, and is working on a suitable 3D engine to portray the on-screen action. Those who have yet to experience the thrills of *Choplifter* may have come into contact with a number of pseudo 're-makes' recently, most notably Cranberry Source's *QAD* – although none have come close to capturing *Choplifter's* simple but effective collect-and-destroy, side-scrolling action. We'll have more details and screenshots very soon.



No – this isn't the new *Choplifter*... it's the original *Commander* hit, soon to be updated by MicroProse.

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COMING MAY 98

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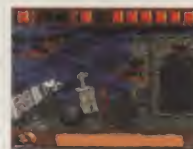
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2D or not 2D?

It was a time of myths. It was a time of legends. It was a time of overused clichés. *Dark Angel* is an unsigned game from

American developers Vicarious Visions, built using Crack Dot Com's *Abuse* engine (released last year as freeware). From what we've seen so far it looks like being a fairly formulaic side-scrolling action/adventure 'em up. It promises

27 interconnected single-player levels, eight multi-player deathmatch arenas (surely limited and dull on a side-scrolling play area?) plus foes, weapons, power-ups and superpowers. More info at <http://www.vvisions.com>



DATA PAD

Stars in their eyes



DMA's David Jones sat cross-legged at his very first 'games school' assembly. Yesterday.

Games Developer UK competition invites game ideas from the games-playing public.

You know what it's like. We're all eunuchs in a harem. How many times have we sat there, slating games, moaning about certain features, or cursing a crap games company for releasing yet another CD-shaped jobby in a cardboard box? We could do better than that. We know what makes a good game.

Well, if you're not just spouting hot air, there's now a chance for

you to get your creative games-playing voice heard and redress the balance by entering the first national amateur games designing competition – ever.

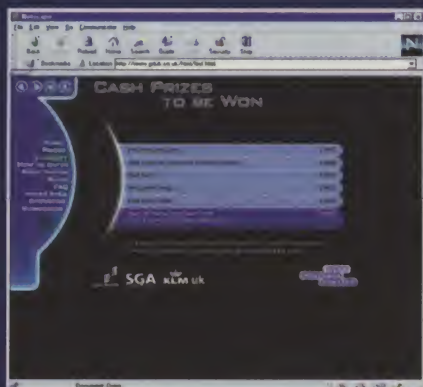
Organised by Games Developers UK – a rag-tag consortium of developers such as *Grand Theft Auto* creators DMA Design and Viz Design, spawners of *HEDZ* – the compo is offering a total of £10,000 in cash prizes in various categories including best artwork/animation, best audio, best utility – then a whopping great big £5000 for the best overall gaming concept. All you have to do is come up with an entry in a specific category, present it on either zip disk, CD or another PC-readable medium, and you could be heading for multi-zillion dollar stardom*. The compo is open to literally anyone in the UK – even students – as long as they are not employed by a games development or publishing company.

Some comments have been levelled at the 'Scottishness' of the competition (most of the sponsors are of Caledonian persuasion), but historically speaking, the Scottish development industry has been far more unified and organised than their scattered English counterparts. And, as reported in *PC Zone* previously, Scotland is host to the UK's first 'video games degree' to be run at Abertay University this September.

Submission forms can be obtained from the Games Developers UK website

(www.gduk.co.uk) or by calling 0800 7315300, and the closing date for all entries is 30 June. Who knows – you too could become a household name like Alexi Pajitnov. You know – the inventor of *Tetris*? Oh never mind... 2

*NB: This is not guaranteed.



If you're on-line, you'll find everything you need to know about the compo at www.gduk.co.uk

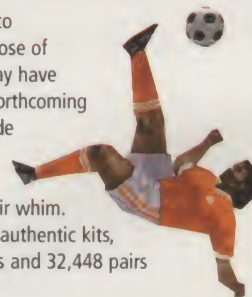
Viva futbol

Virgin Interactive are entering the footie sim market this September with *Viva Football* – a "new type of football simulation" that, it is claimed, will flawlessly recreate the passion, excitement and unpredictability of the real thing on your PC. A bold claim indeed, especially in light of the current flood of quality tigger games due out during May and June.

Developed by Virgin's "elite" 'Crimson' team, *Viva Football* will strive to offer pinpoint accuracy, combined with a large dose of 'pick-up-and-play-ability' for newcomers who may have been smitten by the beautiful game during the forthcoming World Cup this summer. There are plans to include every famous World Cup game from 1962, and players will even be able to jump into them at any point – effectively changing history at their whim. In total *Viva Football* will have 987 teams, 1974 authentic kits, 16,224 real-life players, 259,584 player attributes and 32,448 pairs of football boots. 2



What the..?! Paul Gascoigne 'mounting' Di Matteo during play..?! How could he do such a thing?



Virtual virtual reality

Top inappropriately-scheduled cartoon series, *Reboot*, has taken the next logical step and become a 3D action game, thanks to industry supergroup Electronic Arts.

Transferring the television show's deceptively adult storylines and fully computer-rendered characters and locations is no easy task – which is presumably why the game is focused on action over complexity. You take the part of Bob, the game world's Guardian, tasked with protecting your home 'system' from the evil machinations of Megabyte, a computer virus which is determined to take over the world.

Lush 3D graphics and a *Tomb Raider*-style viewpoint keep the action zipping along, and all the show's characters turn up at various points along the way. More info can be downloaded from Electronic Art's website at www.ea.com. 2



Reboot: adult animated action/drama featuring people with shiny foreheads.

Gran Turismo for PC?

Sony have hinted that there may be a PC version of their stunning PlayStation racer *Gran Turismo* in the pipeline. The

fact that they are working on ports of existing PSX titles (*Twisted Metal* and *Jet Moto*) is enough to confirm their interest in the platform. In a recent interview with a US gaming website,

Gran Turismo creator Kazunori Yamauchi said that all he needs is a 'yes' from the relevant big wig for it to happen. If so, converting possibly the best racer ever would be relatively simple. Sony R&D

have also indicated that they are interested in the capabilities of Voodoo 2, and that they have been experimenting with their software. Lobby Sony now if you want this dream to become reality.



SLIPPAGE CENTRAL

An at-a-glance look at games with changed release dates...

Game	Slipped to
Birth of a Federation (MicroProse)	July
Riot Mobile Armour (Microsoft)	November
SimCity 3000 (Maxis/EA)	September
Star Trek: First Contact (MicroProse)	September
Tanktics (DMA Design)	September
Unreal (Epic/GT)	May




Fingers crossed we'll have a full review of *Unreal* next issue. Will it be worthy of all the hype? We shall soon find out.

NASCAR 3 is on the way

Sales figures and a continued high level of interest would indicate that software developers Papyrus are still way out front when it comes to North American motorsport simulations (ie driving round in circles). Their two NASCAR (North American Stock Car Association Racing) games, *NASCAR Racing 1* and *NASCAR Racing 2*, have sold over two million units worldwide – or about six copies each for everyone in Iceland.

NASCAR Racing 3, due out this Christmas, should build on the success of the last two games as it employs an all-new, ultra-realistic software engine. As well as allowing for authentic crashes and car acrobatics, the new game offers native Rendition and 3Dfx support – which means you should be able to pull an easy 30fps on a Voodoo 2 card.

NASCAR Racing 3 will also be client/server based, meaning that other players will be able to join in on your game seamlessly, without the need for you to have to stop and restart. 



Yet another Milestone




Virgin announce *World Superbike Championship*.

Developed by Milestone – the team that brought us the *Screamer* series – *World Superbike Championship* is an officially licensed droplet into the saturated sponge of the bike racing sub-genre. As such, every team, bike manufacturer and championship track is currently slated to appear when the game is released this September.

If you're one of those people who know all about high-performance bikes, a 'full simulation' mode will cater for you. However, for those of us who haven't got a clue how to even

start one of these up, (thankfully) there's an arcade option to toy with as well. *Superbike* promises ground-breaking graphics and 12 faithfully-reproduced tracks based on real-life counterparts.

Providing Milestone get the control method right, Virgin may have a quality game on their hands, as opposed to just another 'licensed racing simulator'. We'll let you know as and when we review it. 



(Top left) A fantastic picture of some bikes in Virgin's forthcoming *World Superbike Championship*. (Bottom left) Another fantastic picture of some bikes. (Middle) And another. (Right) In this one you'd notice there are *two* bikes.



Tracking the hottest games and their current release dates

Descent: FreeSpace (Interplay)
EBT Tank (DID)
Half-Life (Sierra)
SIN (Activision)
Unreal (GT Interactive)

The Dark Project (Eidos)
Duke Nukem 4 Ever (GT Interactive)
Falcon 4.0 (MicroProse)
FIFA: World Cup 98 (EA Sports)

Blood II (Monolith)

Evora (Psygnosis)
Prey (GT Interactive)

Championship Manager 3 (Eidos)
Civilization III (MicroProse)
Daikatana (Eidos)
Earthsiege 3 (Sierra)
Grand Prix Legends (Sierra)
Populous III (EA)
SimCity 3000 (EA)
ST: First Contact (MicroProse)

Age Of Empires II (Microsoft)
Alpha Centauri (EA)
Blade (Gremlin)
Lands Of Lore III (Westwood)
Settlers III (Blue Byte)

Carmageddon II (SCI)
Constructor II (Acclaim)
FIGP3 (MicroProse)
Grim Fandango (LucasArts)
Messiah (Interplay)
RPG (Gremlin)

Anachronox (Ion Storm)
Diablo II (Blizzard)
Dungeon Keeper 2 (EA)
Total Annihilation II (GT Interactive)

Tenth Planet (Bethesda)

T I M E L I N E

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

JAN '99

iF-22 updated

Interactive Magic have renamed iF-22 Raptor, their air combat sim, iF-22 – The Realistic Simulation Of The F-22 Raptor,

and are to release an update to celebrate iF-22 v 5.0 (as it is now abbreviated to), will contain over two dozen new game features, as well as incorporating all the bug-fixes that have been made available

by I-Magic since the game's initial release last year. More cynical readers may look upon this as 'beta testing software on the public', but with a new padlock view, enhanced AI, improved graphics, better

frame rates and a Persian Gulf setting – not to mention I-Magic's much-lauded Total Air & Land Operations Network (TALON), a flexible campaign editor – as new additions, how could you think that?

DATA PAD

Retro booster

Hasbro Interactive buy the rights to Atari back catalogue.

Encouraged by their success with Konami's *Frogger* last year, Hasbro have acquired the rights to over 75 of Atari's best blasts from the past. First from the can of golden oldies will be *Centipede*, due for release on the PC and PlayStation later this year. Retro classics such as *Pong*, *Missile Command*, *Breakout* and *Tempest* will be appearing soon on all major games platforms.

"We're developing games that appeal to the players who loved them as kids," says Hasbro's President, Tom Dusenberry. "These are all ground-breaking titles that helped pioneer the games industry. We'll bring them back to life with the very latest technology and interactive design, but we'll also make sure we

preserve their heart and spirit."

Hasbro also own the rights to Atari hardware (as well as Action Man and, er, *Sindy Dolls*), but as yet they have no plans to develop another Atari console. **Z**



(Left) *Centipede* 1982. (Middle) *Missile Command* manual. (Right) Actual *Centipede* arcade cabinet.



Fantasy that!

Lovers of D&D-style adventures should get ready for a real treat if *Darkmoor*, from US developers COG Interactive, secures itself a distribution deal on this side of the pond.

The game's storyline revolves around the hunt for a missing Dragon egg (omelette anyone?) and your attempts to reunite it with its mother (saving the world in the process, no doubt). Features to be included will be intelligent AI for NPCs and their respective organisations, realistic outdoor terrain, three-dimensional auto-mapping, a huge playing world (both above and below ground), full 3D for all characters and objects, real-time calendar cycles and (of course) multi-player Internet support.

For the full storyline, more background information and details of a beta test, go visit <http://www.coginteractive.com>. **Z**



Stuck? Can't fight off the rats? Then you'll end up six foot under. That's what.

Get in the Van-gers



A Henry Rollins-dedicated pun to introduce a new Interactive Magic game called *Vangers* there. Sorry about that.

Interactive Magic's *Vangers*... *One For The Road* is a tricky game to categorise. Even producer Paul Potera is uncertain: "It's difficult to explain this game. It's just bizarre." Essentially, it involves driving a strange buggy around ten worlds which are in a constant state of evolution, as is your buggy, which can be enhanced, armed with guns or traded for a better model. The worlds – with themes such as lava, sand and urban – can be travelled between freely, and the game is totally non-linear. It's almost like the gaming equivalent of a new age meditation tape. As for the point, Potera says: "I can't tell you what it is, that's part of the game. If I did it'd be like saying, "Wow, Darth is Luke's father," right before you saw *Star Wars*. **Z**

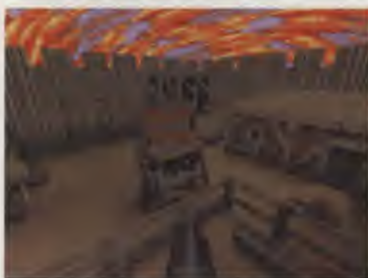


The point of *Vangers*? We can't tell you, it would give the game away...

Quake out west

Remember *Outlaws*? A hugely promising game, let down by awful graphics. The LucasArts programming team clearly hadn't heard of Gouraud shading, nor did they realise that 'dynamic lighting' was a technique and not a reference to angle poise lamps.

Anyway, if you liked *Outlaws*, you'll go a bundle on *Western Trilogy* – a forthcoming *Quake II* add-on pack set in the American Wild West. Because it uses the familiar iD Software engine, the levels look and feel just like film sets, plus all the monsters have been re-skinning, and an all new brace of weapons, sounds and textures added. Keep an eye on <http://www.albatross.co.uk/~maverick/> for updates. **Z**



BEAST WARS

TRANSFORMERS

THE MAXIMALS AND THE PREDACONS ARE AT WAR. AFTER A MAJOR BATTLE ABOVE 'PLANET ENERCON', TWO BADLY DAMAGED SCOUT SHIPS FROM OPPOSING SIDES ARE FORCED TO CRASH LAND.

THE MAXIMALS CRASH IN THE JUNGLE AREA OF THE PLANET. SIX TRANSFORMERS SURVIVE.

I...FEEL WEAK.
MY E-NE-R-G-Y'S
DR-AI-N-I-N-G.

OH SH-I-T!
ENERGON!!!
THAT'S ALL WE NEED!

THE LOCAL ANIMALS
DON'T SEEM TO BE AFFECTED?
I WONDER?

A MAXIMAL SCANS THE MOLECULAR
STRUCTURE OF A CHEETAH.

DO YOU
MIND?

FY: ENERGON: LETHAL
TO TRANSFORMERS.
AS IT DRAINS THEIR
POWER.

MEANWHILE IN THE DESERT REGION THE
PREDACONS HAVE HAD THE SAME IDEA.

TOGETHER THEY...

TRANSFORM

INTO BEASTS... CREATING CHEETOR AND TARANTULUS.

YOU STAY AND FIND
MORE ANIMALS TO
TRANSFORM INTO, I'M OFF
TO FIND THOSE DAMNED
PREDACONS.

CHEETOR MAXIMAL RACES TO FIND THE
PREDACONS...

UNSEEN, TARANTULUS SPOTS THE
APPROACHING CHEETOR.

SOON HE
NEARS THEIR SHIP.

AT LAST REVENGE
IS MINE!!!

CHEETOR DODGES THE MISSILES AND
TRANSFORMS TO USE HIS AWESOME WEAPONS
AGAINST TARANTULUS.

WHO'LL WIN THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE
MAXIMALS AND THE PREDACONS?

I'LL SKIN
YOU ALIVE...
MAXIMAL SCUM!
PREPARE
TO DIE!!!

I'M GOING TO PULL YOUR
LEGS OFF ONE BY ONE,
THEN I'M GOING TO
GET REALLY NASTY.

I THINK NOT...
...FUR-BALL!

AS TRANSFORMER WEAPONS ONLY OPERATE IN ROBOT
MODE, TARANTULUS CHANGES BACK AND HAS ONLY
A SHORT TIME TO DISPOSE OF HIS ENEMY BEFORE THE
ENERGON TAKES EFFECT!



ONLY YOU CAN DECIDE!

10 TRANSFORMING CHARACTERS. 3 3-D TERRAINS. 24 MISSIONS OF MIND-BLOWING COMBAT. COLLECTABLE FIGURES AVAILABLE.

Also available on PlayStation™ PlayStation is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment.



Cheap sports games here

Two of last year's most acclaimed sports games are to be re-released at a price that's 'nice'. Both *Jonah Lomu Rugby* and

Pete Sampras Tennis are widely considered leaders in their respective fields, and will be available on the new Codemasters Classics label as of 1 May. Paupers can now own them for the princely sum of £12.99 each,

which is about the same price as a hardback book, a music CD, a couple of bottles of wine, six pints of ale, 80 Benson & Hedges, 13 lottery tickets, a 'block' of 'weed', or a punch in the face.



DATA PAD

The Killing Fields

Drinking beer, and killing other people in *Quake II*. Two things that David McCandless is very good at.



Look! Boys, playing *Quake* against girls! Is it proper?

It's just what the world needs – another freaking cyber-café. A bunch of fat shouting cybertwats with shirts open to the nipples barking on about techno-futurism and occasionally swigging their poncey Japanese beer from frosted bottles. Er, well, that's the image. Luckily, The

Playing Fields, a new

London café with computers, is the exact opposite. Started by ex-Army games enthusiasts Edward Watson and Charles Allen, The Playing Fields is a games café where patrons are encouraged to drink beer, eat sandwiches and play over twenty network games on a bunch of high-powered ninja machines. The well-designed, trendy-looking basement is frequented by students, young professionals, and – eek – girls.

"Yeah, we get loads of girls down here," says manager Edward. "They don't play but they sit in the bar area, looking for boyfriends." Yeah, chinny reckon.

When you're not hanging out in the large bar area snogging the innumerable girls, you can waddle over to the various 'combat alcoves' and large network area where easy-to-use on-screen menus engage games like *Quake II*, *Duke Nukem*, *C&C*, *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*, *Red Alert* and *Atomic Bomberman*. Each IBM 233MHz games-station sports an Orchid 3Dfx card and a pair of headphones with a microphone.

"We've got an extra audio network," explains Edward, "so people can talk to each other while they're playing. We're aiming to get companies down here to do team-building."

It has to be said, the whole place radiates style. Architecturally designed, it has wall paintings, subtle lighting, a big red futsal table, and groovy music playing. Prices range from £4.00 to £6.00 per hour depending on the membership you've chosen, but every new sign-up gets a range of discounts on beer, guests and food – all squeezed onto a flash-looking swipe-card.

"We're going to have leagues and competitions and LAN parties," explains Edward. "Everyone's invited apart from our bank manager. We sat him in front of *Duke Nukem* and he went green."

Check out whether you get motion-sick from games from 12pm to 11pm every day at 139-143 Whitfield Street (nearest tubes Warren Street and Goodge Street). Tel: 0171-388-0004. <http://www.theplayingfields.co.uk>. 2



The Playing Fields sports some suitably moody lighting – makes for good *Quake*.

Star Control 4 from Accolade

After three *Star Control* games it's happened – the name's changed.

Add to this the introduction of 3D for the first time and you have Accolade's fourth instalment in the series. Aside from the cosmetic changes, *StarCon* has this time become more 'combat' than 'colony building', in something of a departure from its predecessors.

From three alliances, choose a race and work on your infamy as the game goes on and the plot line branches out. Comparisons with *Colony Wars* have been made, although *StarCon* does appear to lean more towards a strategy game than just another fancy shoot 'em up. The best example of this is the ability to control huge carriers

and their individual gun turrets in battle, rather than just a small, poorly-armed fighter.

And finally, up to eight players can fight among themselves or help each other out in tough missions. This alone could make *StarCon* worth looking at, when the heavens bestow it upon us at the end of the year. 2



Another zoom into the screen-style sparsa shoot 'em up? The horror.

X-rated flight combat

After the comparative low of *Red Baron II*, Dynamix are to make another determined assault on the historical flight sim genre, this time moving on to World War II.

Aces: The X-Fighters deals not only with the more familiar WWII aircraft (Spitfires, Fokkers, Mustangs, Fokkers, Messerschmitts, Fokkers and so on) but some of the more experimental jet-powered aircraft of the time (You like saying 'Fokkers', I take it? – Ed). And if you're one of those armchair general types who like to think they know more than the military leaders of the day, you can even customise your own aircraft.

Dynamix's traditional career-path campaign engine is still on offer, along with full support for Sierra's Internet Gaming System. Learning from their mistakes, *X-Fighters* will also come with full 3D accelerator support, a welcome relief to those of us that had to play *Red Baron II* (and pay for the subsequent optician bills). 2



Sex at 10,000 feet, or über generic flight sim? Our jonnies at the ready...



DirectX 6.0 in July

The Microsoft DirectX Group recently announced that the latest version of their now-standard 3D graphics driver will be filtered out into the public

domain from July onwards. As well as working closely with a number of developers on the project, Microsoft are also planning to go ahead with a beta test 'open day' aimed at gathering last-minute comments and suggestions before

they freeze the code. Microsoft are confident that DirectX 6.0 will provide exactly what developers need to produce the fastest games, and the best graphics possible within Windows 95. The PC Zone team are also hoping that a much-

promised 'screen capture' key is included, so that taking screenshots is made easier for everyone. By that we're not talking about just us... we really do mean *everyone*. Now aren't we nice? But you knew that already.

Redneck Rides Again



"A rocket up the skirt there missy? Why, sorry - I was aiming at the redneck behind you."

More redneck enemies are on the cards, such as Billy Ray Jeeter, Skinny Old Coot and a bunch of angry bikers, plus maybe even an Elvis sighting or two. On top of that, driveable vehicles, including a Big Hog motorcycle and a swamp buggy are also due to make an appearance. The outrageous and controversial Mojo Nixon is again down to provide banjo licks and mouth harp twangs to tap your feet to. All in all, it sounds like rootin' tootin' good fun to us. **Z**

More chicken-plucking, high-falutin' white trash action with an all-new *Redneck Rampage* add-on pack.

Bubba and Leonard, stars of Xatrix Entertainment's *Redneck Rampage*, are to return in a mission pack sequel later this year. *Redneck Rampage Rides Again* will pick up from where the last game left off - with our two dungaree-clad heroes fighting for survival across America, after stealing an alien spacecraft and crash-landing it in the Arkansas desert (which may prove an unwise location in these troubled times, and will no doubt be changed). This time the hapless duo get to visit 12 new places, including Jackalope Farms, Disgraceland, a river boat and a brothel.

More redneck enemies



(Left) It's a f**king disgrace! (Above) One new level unfolds aboard a mysterious steamboat full of aliens.

Deadly floaters

Ripcord's *Stratosphere: Conquest Of The Skies* involves the design and construction of massive floating fortresses - huge juggernauts of land that float about menacingly and do battle a thousand feet up in the air. Inspired by HG Wells and sounding like one of Baron Munchausen's escapades, there are 24 missions in the game and over 60 different structures with progressive technology that enable you to beef up your firepower and crap all over the opposition.

Stratosphere can be played either as a single-player game or as a multi-player (modem or LAN) feast for up to four players, with variations that include deathmatch, escort and ground strike. The software engine generates a modish 3D environment with rendered mountain tops and cloud banks, giving the feeling that you really are up with the pigeons. The castle cities themselves are rendered in such a way that every blow causes walls to crack and crumble. **Z**



Stratosphere bears a resemblance to Activision's excellent on-line strategy game *NetStorm*. Looks very interesting all the same. **Z**



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BEST SELLING ADVENTURE GAME.

AVAILABLE FOR THE 1st TIME

OUT 04.04.98

Viggo

Morrowind in the willows

Bethesda are working on the third instalment of the *Elder Scrolls* series, tentatively entitled *Morrowind*. Having learnt from mistakes

made in *Daggerfall* (and there were a few of them), project leader Ken Ralston is hoping to introduce a more useable and flexible conversation system than the ones seen in previous *Elder Scrolls* games. More will be

made of the guild-based missions because of this – even to the point where it could be the mainstay of the main game. Additionally, *Morrowind*'s 3D engine will be vastly overhauled in an attempt to move away from

Daggerfall's 'samey' template system. This should allow for a greater variety of levels and more complex dungeon design. In terms of architecture, Bethesda reckon it'll be what RPG fans have been looking for.

DATA PAD

Golloping gameplay



Golloping graphics are well. Take a look at these beauties.

on the cat. Anyway, tinkering with an old experiment, you're instantly propelled into an alternative reality. As luck would have it, you remembered to keep hold of his conjuring book, giving you the power to summon beings.

The game is capable of dealing with up to 36 players at any one time, features three realms (each with historically accurate mythology, flora and architecture), more than 30 different regions and over 3000 terrain elements. Look out for it in the autumn. **Z**

New strategy action game from the creators of X-COM.

Famous for a string of seminal titles that includes the celebrated *X-COM* series, Nick and Julian Gollop of Mythos Games have been busy cooking up a new Internet action/strategy game for the PC. Called *Magic And Mayhem*, the story features an apprentice (ie you) who's recently inherited a citadel – a sort of 'wizard's potting shed' where an eccentric uncle used to create new spells and test them



(Top) An exchange of magical energy results in toasted underpants. (Above) No surrender!

Acclaim grab SouthPark

The licence for cult US animated cable TV show *South Park* has been bought up by Acclaim, who plan to make a game of the series to be released in 1999. Watched by over five million viewers on Comedy Central every week, *South Park*'s endearing mixture of lo-fi animation and off-kilter adult humour is now showing on Sky TV, with a planned terrestrial launch expected on Channel 4 in June. Those already familiar with the exploits of Cartman, Kyle, Kenny et al will no doubt agree that the idea of a *South Park* game is a good one, and it will be of great interest to see what Acclaim come up with. So far, nothing else has been announced, and we're not even sure what sort of game it's going to be. Rest assured that if Acclaim blow it, *PC Zone* will be forced to do the 'decent' and 'honest' thing and go round and kick their heads in. **Z**



The chef gives Cartman a piggyback.



(Left) *South Park* is not for kiddies. (Above) "This is pretty f---ed up, right here," say Kyle and Stan.



(Left) Ooh, that's very Arthur C Clark. (Above) A good heavyweight sci-fi strategy sim can be a lot of fun.

Malkari malarkey

Turn-based, space-based strategy games continue to spout forth aplenty, the latest addition to the genre being *Malkari* from Interactive Magic. In a similar vein to *Empire's Stars*, LucasArts' *Star Wars Supremacy* and Sid Meier's forthcoming *Alpha Centauri*, this latest contribution is under development at I-Magic's North Carolina headquarters and is being designed by England's Adrian Earle, who also worked on *Destiny* for the same company. The game revolves around the domination and expansion of up to 150 asteroids, the remnants of the decimation of the *Malkari* solar system. Supporting up to 40 players via LAN, Internet or e-mail, participants are split up into separate Guilds, each comprising eight Chapters. Guilds compete for ownership of asteroids, which can be mined for minerals. Ships can then be bought, sold and even designed from scratch. We've seen *Malkari* with our own eyes, and it's currently looking mighty purdy. **Z**

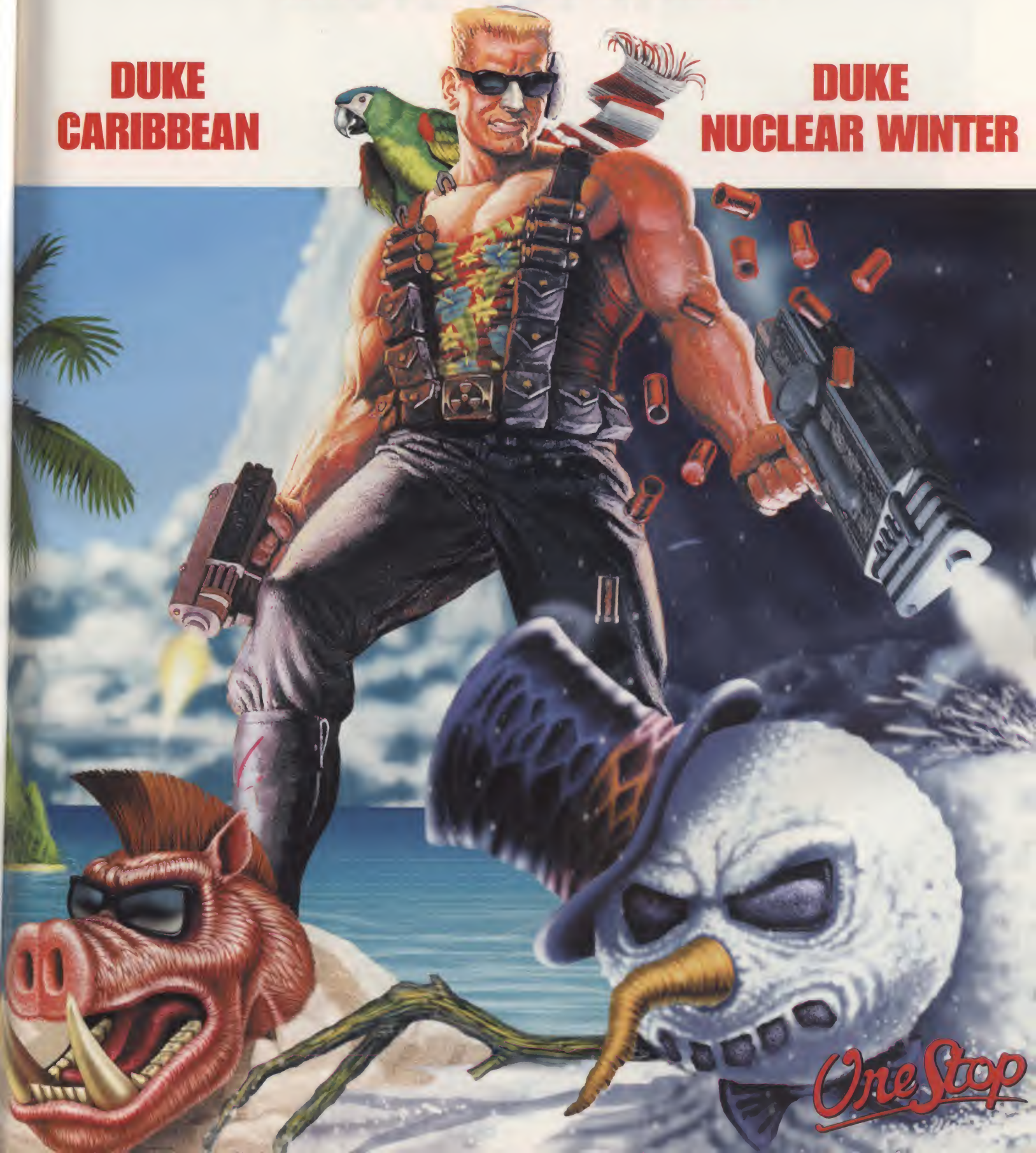
DUKE

WHATEVER THE WEATHER

WITH 2 NEW ADD ON PACKS

**DUKE
CARIBBEAN**

**DUKE
NUCLEAR WINTER**



Disney Sports games to hit PC

Disney Interactive have announced three new sports titles to be released in the wake of last year's disappointing platformer,

Disney's Action Game Featuring Disney's Hercules™. Hoping to reverse the fortunes of a year which has seen drastic cuts at Disney Interactive's US development arm, this trio of action sims will cover the

popular sports of snowboarding, ice hockey, and basketball. While little is currently known as to the content of the games, Disney are almost certain to drape their ice hockey game with The Might Ducks of

Anaheim branding, seeing as they own the LA-based club lock stock and barrel. Also, Disney's links with ABC Sports (Disney own ABC) will no doubt dictate the look and feel of the presentation. More soon.

DATA PRO

Game on for Hollywood



It used to be the other way round: software houses lashed out the bucks in an attempt to secure a precious movie licence to perk up an otherwise unexciting game. Now, a flurry of announcements regarding big-screen versions of computer gaming hits would appear to imply that Mister Shoe has switched feet. We asked Charlie Brooker to pick over the details like a crow hunting for ants in a cow pat. This is his summary.

Tomb Raider – due 1999

(Paramount Pictures)

No surprise here – we've been anticipating it for ages – but confirmation has finally arrived that the ubiquitous Ms Croft is *definitely* going to be appearing at a cinema near you in the near future. *Tomb Raider* publishers Eidos have signed on the dotted line with Paramount Pictures and heavy-weight production duo Lawrence Gordon and Lloyd Levin – previously involved with bona fide blockbusters such as *Die Hard*, *Die Hard 2* and *Predator*, not to mention the Eddie Murphy/Nick Nolte vehicle *48 Hours* and, more recently, superb 'weighty penis' epic *Boogie Nights*. At the time of writing, no announcement has been made concerning the cast – let's hope they don't have a funny turn and accidentally put Nigel from *EastEnders* in the lead role. Especially if the script calls for the main protagonist to stomp around in a pair of tight shorts and bend over a lot. Which it will.

What's it going to be like?

Probably a bit like Indiana Jones meets Modesty Blaise, although the wildcard *Boogie Nights* connection means the possibility of it turning into a hard-core porn flick can't be completely ruled out (Yes it can – Paramount Pictures). Expect Lara to have a) large bosoms, b) large guns, and c) a wimpy male sidekick for the purposes of 'hilarious' comic relief and probable love interest.

Who's in it? Like we said, there has been no announcement so far, although the gossips favour yawnsome sloaney curvebag Liz Hurley as Lara.

Lara photos by David Tene



The big question here is: just who will play Lara Croft? Liz Hurley has been touted, but we reckon Sandra Bullock might make a pleasing alternative.

Apparently the film will be set entirely on earth. And for the moment that's it, details-wise.

What's it going to be like? Two whole hours of uninterrupted gunfire punctuated by the tortured shrieks of the mutilated.

Who's going to be in it? Your guess is as good as ours, although Thora Hird probably won't be getting her hands dirty.

Box office poison? Well, *Doom* may be yesterday's news, but if they get Peter Jackson (*Bad Taste*, *Braindead*, *The Frighteners*) to direct – and they made the whole thing in 3D – then it would be a dream come true.

Possible poster tagline: "Blam. Blam. Blam. Blam. Blam. Blam. Blam. Blam. Blam."

Box office poison? Given Lara's popularity and the movie-serial flavour of the games, it could be a thumping big hit.

Possible poster tagline: "Say Hi To The Heroine Who Shoots You Up."

Doom – due 1999

(TriStar Pictures)

After three long years lodged in its lower intestine, it seems iD's landmark kill-a-thon really is going to emerge from the Hollywood sphincter after all. Producers Dino Monte and Moe Lospinoso, and writers Ron Mita and Jim McClain have been fingered, although no director has been announced.



Duke Nukem – due 1999

(Threshold Entertainment)

Yes, folks, everyone's favourite misogynistic, mass-murdering Aryan is all set to strut his stuff across the nation's movie screens some time next year. According to producer Larry Katanoff, previously



(Left) Here's a behind-the-scenes shot from the *Doom* set. (Above) You have 20 seconds to comply.

Creatures 2 from Mindscape

Cyberlife Technologies are to introduce a new breed of Norns and a wholly superior artificial intelligence system in a sequel to the critically

acclaimed *Creatures*. Snapped up for a European release through Mindscape, *Creatures 2* will almost certainly include the facility to import Norns from the first outing, and will enable them to interact with their more advanced cousins.

There will also be something called a 'virtual ecosystem', which apparently changes depending on how much your Norn shits on it.

Meanwhile, the original *Creatures* – just out on budget – continues to gather awards and

praise, the latest being its inclusion onto US Senator Joseph Lieberman's 'Non-violent Computer Games That Are Safe For All Ages' list, 1997. We wait with trepidation to see if *Creatures 2* makes it onto his 1998 list.



Will the forthcoming Resident Evil movie spark a new trend for zombie films?

responsible for arthouse treasures *Mortal Kombat Annihilation* and *Ghoulies 3: Ghoulies Go To College* (1985), "the self-proclaimed politically incorrect Duke Nukem character fits into the broader entertainment marketplace, offering a wealth of potential storylines and the opportunity to create unique worlds and special effects". In other words, they reckon it's a shit-hot earner, guv.

What's it going to be like? Not Babette's Feast, that's for damn sure. Zone anticipates a cross between Private Parts, Starship Troopers and Rambo, with lots of one-liners, a dash of gratuitous sexism, and thousands of CGI beasts having their heads blown off.

Who's in it? No word yet, but Roddy Piper (star of *They Live* and *Hell Comes To Frogtown*) would be a good choice, especially since the Dukester's best lines are swiped from Piper movies.

Box office poison? Hard to say. A lot will probably depend on the success or otherwise of the imminent Duke Nukem 4ever.

Possible poster tagline: "He's Big. He's Bad. He Murders Scantily Clad Women. And He'll Blast His Way Into Your Heart!"

Resident Evil – due 1998 (Constantin Film Productions)

Capcom's poo-your-bitches *Alone In The Dark* clone is currently being transformed into a poo-your-bitches horror film by none other than George Sluzier, director of the utterly chilling *The Vanishing* – let's hope *RE The Movie* bears more resemblance to the original foreign language version of that film, rather than the piss-weak Hollywood remake of the same name (Sluzier being responsible for both). Alan



Wing Commander's problem is its 'made for TV' feel. They'll have to try harder for the big screen.

McElroy (*Halloween IV*, *Spawn*) is Mister Script. **What's it going to be like?** Shit-scary, we hope.

Who's in it? Lots of zombies.

Box office poison? The games are a runaway success, so there's a receptive audience already.

Possible poster tagline: "Boo!"

Wing Commander – due 1999 (Digital Anvil)

Proving once and for all that the recent WC games were little more than an excuse for Chris

Roberts to indulge in some crazy film director fantasy, *Wing Commander The Movie* is currently shooting in Luxembourg. Roberts is at the helm, making his big-screen debut, and the cast includes naughty Malcolm McDowell, the unpronounceable Jurgen Prochnow, sassy Saffron Burrows, and – bizarrely – David 'Poirot' Suchet.

What's it going to be like? Probably something like watching someone else playing *Wing Commander IV* for a couple of hours.

Who's in it? See above – although what's interesting is who isn't in it, namely Mark 'Star Wars' Hamill and Ginger Lynn 'Sex Asylum' Allen.

Box office poison? Maybe, maybe not – anything can happen in this ker-azy world of showbinnis, ladies and gentlemen. Oh yes.

Possible poster tagline: "Sit There And Suffer, You Hateful Sheep."

Interstate '76 – due 1999 (Fox Studios)

Wikka wakka wikka wakka... Wah-wah guitar aficionados everywhere can prepare to leap up and down with pre-pubescent excitement at the news that the rights to Activision's *Starsky And Hutch*-style car 'em up have been snapped up by John Davis Productions, who plan to turn it all into a 'motion picture' for the benefit of 20th Century Fox. Hmm.

What's it going to be like? Probably a knowing, tongue-in-cheek *Starsky And Hutch* with loads of car chases in it. Its main problem could be 'bad language'. We hope it has lots.

Who's in it? No names mentioned thus far, but it'd be a great opportunity for David Soul to make a Travolta-style ironic comeback.

Coming back the other way

Not content with nicking ideas from the videogaming world, it seems Hollywood is still keen to offload some of their older ideas back into the digital marketplace, in a kind of bizarre intellectual property part-exchange scenario thing. MGM have recently entered the fray by announcing PC games based on *WarGames* (1983) and *Rollerball* (1972).



Never say never. MGM Interactive think it's time to resurrect these old films.

Box office poison? Rather depends on the public's ongoing willingness to view anything Seventies as inherently 'funny'.

Possible poster tagline: "Ha ha ha! Sideburns! Ha ha ha! Look! It's all seventies! Ha ha!" 2



Will Fox Studios make a sanitised fashion movie, or a 'pop-a-cap-in-your-ass'-style blockbuster?

And also...

Aside from movies based on existing games, there are a couple of flicks in the pipeline whose plots concern the gaming world in general. First up, and due any moment now, is *Nirvana*, starring Christopher Lambert – a highbrow Italian sci-fi effort involving a programmer's attempts to delete all copies of his latest game after its lead character unexpectedly becomes self-aware. Then in 1999 we can all enjoy *eXistenZ* from body-horror specialist David Cronenberg. Jennifer Jason Leigh is set to star in the tale of a future world in which "games designers are society's powerbrokers". Presumably she'll get turned on whenever there's a system crash. Crash, geddit? Bwaha ha ha ha! Ha! Ha? Huh. Please yourselves.

Zone needs you!

If you're the sort of person whose life revolves around the world of PC gaming, and are more than capable of stringing a

sentence together, then *PC Zone* would like to hear from you. Many of our existing writers are pasty-faced fanatics who have been playing computer games since they looked down upon their very first erection.

You may be the same. Successful applicants get to see the latest games in development (as well as travelling the world in the process), and get to earn money writing about them. Interested parties should send

their contact details, plus a 400-word review of a game of their choosing to: Mark Higham, *PC Zone*, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ. Alternatively, you can e-mail it to us at: mhigham@dennis.co.uk.

DATA PAD



Stuff and nonsense.

According to news just in from Hollywood, it has been revealed that erstwhile teen starlet Matthew Broderick was approached to reprise his role in the game update of the 1983 film *WarGames*. Broderick – who also played the part of Ferris Bueller – recently starred in *Addicted To Love* and *The Cable Guy*, but with acting in games currently enjoying a similar status to amateur dramatics, it seems that he thought better of whoring himself for the interactive dollar – unlike say, Dennis Hopper. *WarGames* is due to be published by MGM, and a source close to the project revealed: "It was an idea to use Matthew Broderick to narrate sections of the game. But as well as cost reasons, he wasn't sure he'd want to be associated with it – there's a bad buzz about videogames and actors in Hollywood." The game will be a strategy title and, despite his non-involvement, Broderick is said to be following its progress with interest.

Taken game/violence controversy this month comes from Japan, of all places, with the blame for society's ills again placed squarely on the shoulders of the interactive entertainment industry. In the latest of a spate of violent incidents involving teenagers, a 13-year-old boy stabbed a schoolmate to death over a practical joke. In response to the tragedy, Tokyo University psychology professor Teruhisa Horio said: "Look at all the virtual reality computer games: when someone dies, they just jump up and fight again. Teenage game players don't know the difference between life and death." Informed comment or knee jerk reaction? You decide.

More of the same comes by way of *Messiah*, the forthcoming weird 'em up from Shiny Entertainment. The game involves killing prostitutes as well as disappearing up people's arses in order to take over their bodies, and has come in for some moral criticism. The creative team has taken a defensive stance, and one member admitted: "I have the feeling that some of the more conservative mainstream retailers may have a bit of a problem with the content. They'll have to balance 'this hit game will make lots of money for us' with 'a woman in Des Moines may write a letter saying she doesn't like the game'... I think we'll win that battle." The designers of *Messiah* have little truck with the notion that games inspire violence, and state: "We think people – both young and old – can separate fact from fiction. This game is fiction. If you don't like the idea behind our game, don't buy it." (Which is pretty much what happened with *MDK*.)

It seems the censorship issue never relents, finding increasingly obtuse ways of manifesting its malevolent, hateful form. The latest victim is boxes, with reports that retailers are refusing to stock Interplay's *Of Light And Darkness* on the grounds that the cover art is too provocative. The box features original work by artist Gil Bruehl, and portrays one of the characters, Angel Gemini, huddled in a tucked position, as if she were hiding. Interplay's Kim Motika wailed: "I find it hard to comprehend that retailers could stock a game such as *Tomb Raider* and then claim our box is too provocative. If these game environments were paintings, they would sell from 10 to 50 thousand dollars in the fine art market." Oddly though, no retailers have actually been named, and the box has yet to be criticised in public. Coincidentally, the supposed furor comes as a Beverly Hills exhibition of Bruehl's work is planned. How many 'm's in media manipulation?

\$2,000,000 buys a lot of pies, but that's the sum Eidos could stand to lose for using the name *Myth*. System 3, developers of the classic game of the same name – currently being remade – are threatening to sue for that amount, having previously issued a warning prior to release. Interestingly, Eidos claim to have never published a game called *Myth*, their title carrying the name *Myth: The Fallen Lords*. Nobody likes a smart arse.

Finally, publishers are expressing fears that they may lose their target audience for the duration of the forthcoming World Cup, with many delaying releases until the conclusion of the tournament. Presumably, the delay will be a lot shorter in Scotland.

No surrender.

Formulaic One

Infogrames have just released details of their latest offering: *Prost Grand Prix PC*, from French design team Visiware. The game has been two years in the making and looks like it will be a welcome addition to any self-respecting petrolhead's games collection.

Visiware claim that the game is "totally orientated around simulation", though they've also included various driving-assisted options to help the more uninitiated gamer enjoy the experience. The detail packed into the game is immense, with 16 circuits from last year's Grand Prix season included and myriad options concerning your car's set-up and handling.

Due for release in June, the game could well take pole position in the world of Grand Prix sims. For a sneak peek, point your browser to <http://www.infogrames.com>.



French media company Canal+ are behind this PC racing project. Infogrames are to publish.

Space, above and bedaubed

Another addition to the ever increasing legion of 'unsigned as yet' games currently doing the rounds is *Terminus*, from the team behind *Dark Angel* (see page 18).

Set in a chaotic future, the game is a real-time 3D space fighter simulator, which will basically comprise roaming around the galaxy, trading and pirating... *Elite* with knobs on anyone? It'll use advanced 3D texture mapping technology, a plethora of configurable ships to opt for, as well as accurate Newtonian physics model, plus real-time voice communication between pilots in multi-player mode... no doubt leading to insults, broken friendships and quite possibly fisticuffs. Sounds great to us.



YOU READ IT HERE FIRST

As the magazine closes, we round up the last few titbits of gaming information for your reading pleasure... Psygnosis look set for a busy year ahead. As well as a bunch of other games we've already mentioned, they are also developing a number of extra titles to be released before the end of this year. *Global Domination* is a strategy/arcade shoot 'em

up with a powerful 3D engine at the heart of it; *Or Die Trying* is the working title of a "bizarre" (their words...) combat adventure set in the world of 'Tonantzin'; *Panzer Elite* is Psygnosis' entry into the WWII tank combat sim arena; *PFA Soccer Manager* will be out on PlayStation first, then on PC; *Brainless* is a graphic adventure with a mad professor who "zaps his own brainwaves"; a DVD *Gravitar* remake by the name of *Lander*; and *Salvation* which is a combined racing/shoot 'em up with arcade leanings. All are due out in November. More on all titles next month. *Swords & Sorcery: Come*

Devils, Come Darkness is a new RPG developed by Heuristic Park (nice name – not), and is rumoured to be coming from Virgin. This 3D adventure is being designed by David Bradley (who worked on *Wizardry* four, five and six), and will have a multi-player 'party' facility, so that six people can team up and fight it out together in the same game. We'll have first screenshots next issue.

Finally, a little bird tells us that Raven have announced *Heretic II* – even more spell-slinging action for *Quake* engine addicts, although this one uses an enhanced version of *Quake II*. We also hear that it's a third-person view – à la *Tomb Raider*. We'll have more next issue.

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HOT Shots

Quake II: The Reckoning (ID/Activision)

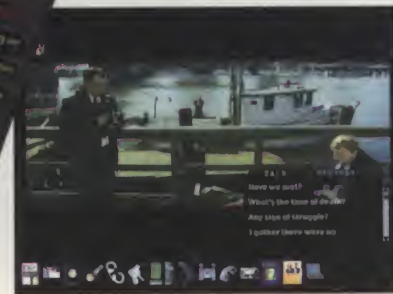
Redneck Rampage creators Xatrix have released more work-in-progress screenshots of the new official *Quake II* mission pack *The Reckoning*, and by 'eck they're looking good. *The Reckoning* is due in late spring and will feature 15 new single-player levels plus tons of added multiplayer maps (which, let's face it, the game needs). There are three new weapons, including the "bigger than a BFG" Phallanx Particle Cannon, the Ion Ripper (with bullets that ricochet), and the Trap, which sucks enemies into an energy field, grinds them up and turns them into an energy-boosting food cube (Licensed by Oxo, then? - Ed). There'll also be some sort of a repair droid that goes around resurrecting dead monsters after you've offed them, more environmental puzzles (less switches?), exploding walls and a race-against-the-clock challenge.



The X-Files (Fox Interactive)

Live-action adventure games haven't made much of an impression in the past - we can probably count the good ones on one hand. However, Fox Interactive's home-grown *X-Files* adventure game could potentially regenerate some interest in the genre when it is released in the summer.

These new screenshots show off Fox's new VirtualCinema 3.0 technology, as well as both David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson's 'best side.' You have to team up FBI agents Mulder and Scully, assigned to solve a murder most foul spread over 30 locations, including FBI offices, morgues, motels, businesses, residences, labs and warehouses which "were created to give players a seemingly boundless variety of authentic places to explore and investigate" (it says here). Shot over a seven-week period on location in and around Seattle, numerous creative personnel from the television series were also involved in the game, including series writer/co-executive producer Frank Spotnitz and *The X-Files* music maestro Mark Snow.



Diablo II (Blizzard/Sierra)

The game

So what will *Diablo II* have that the first one didn't? Lots, we hear. Take a deep breath, then read on...

Tile-based play is being dropped in favour of 'true' point-and-click play (whatever that is); more/better transparency effects (including stained glass); more realistic non-player character AI, including fluid movement and ambient sound effects; enhanced lighting effects (including coloured lighting); a 'run' feature for the main player characters; a wider field of view (ie titchier graphics); higher dungeon ceilings and multi-level dwellings and structures; four brand new towns and wilderness areas to explore; class-specific fighting techniques and spells; over 20 new quests; improved Battle.net support which will enable increased multi-player capacity; and an on-line trading post – plus so much more that you're doubtless filling your undercrackers in anticipation as you read this.

The characters

Blizzard's first *Diablo* game had some disgustingly loathsome creatures lurking within its dark recesses, but with *Diablo II* the game's developers plan to go much further. Apparently only 10 per cent of the monsters seen in the original *Diablo* will survive into the sequel, most having already been superseded by such abominations as the Razorback (a 500-pound reptile with spikes on its back), the Gorgon (half-human, half-snake), Evil Rouge (massive 'Wally Jumblatts') and the strangely monikered Gangly Devil (which may or may not be able to fly – depending on what Blizzard decide). Shown here is a selection of some of the best.



HOT Shots

Hostile Waters (Rage)

Rage Software have obviously got a handle on this 3D malarkey – you've only got to look at *Incoming* to realise that – and they're continuing their exploration of the art form with *Hostile Waters*, a game which has been described as something of a spirited update of the classic 16-bit action/strategy game *Carrier Command*. As such, *Hostile Waters* will be chock-full of action more than capable of producing a sweaty patch on the back of your shirt during play. It doesn't use the *Incoming* engine, however – although it wouldn't have existed without the aforementioned shoot 'em up. This game is to feature far, far more goodies, including fully deformable terrain which scorches and dips with explosive strikes, and a heavy emphasis on arcade-style strategy gaming. Look out for a full preview soon.



World League Soccer (Silicon Dreams/Eidos)

A playable version of Silicon Dreams' *World League Soccer* came into the office this month, and here are a few of the screenshots we were able to grab for you. What you can't tell from these, however, is how well the game is currently playing. After *Actua 2* and *FIFA: Road To World Cup*, the world is now looking for bigger and better alternatives before shelling out on something to play during lulls between World Cup matches this summer. Combining fast 3D visuals and some of the best motion-capture we've as yet experienced, *World League Soccer* looks set to cause *World Cup '98*, *Sensible Soccer World Cup '98*, and *Three Lions* some serious aggro when it's released in May.



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CHART

Predictions



THE CHART THIS MONTH IS SO CRAMMED-PACKED WITH EXCELLENT TITLES that anyone looking to buy just one game could have a serious dilemma on their hands. If it's good old-fashioned combat action you're after, *Battlezone*, straight in at the Number One spot, could be the answer. Originally released in 1980, it has been revamped and re-released and now offers slick, thrilling gameplay with all the latest graphics and features to help in your plight to secure humanity's survival.

To take part in this month's Our Price Top 10 prize giveaway, just put pen to paper, answer the question below and send it in to: PC Zone, Our Price Competition (63), Dennis Publishing Ltd, 19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ.

Our Price Question:

IN WHAT YEAR DID *BATTLEZONE* MAKE ITS FIRST APPEARANCE IN THE ARCADES?

Rules and restrictions: All entries must be received by Friday 8 May 1998. No correspondence will be entered into. Multiple entries will not be accepted. The Editor's decision is final and the winners will be notified by post. All other usual competition rules and restrictions apply.



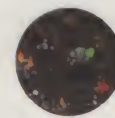
Welcome to PC Zone's version of *The Chart Show*, sponsored by Our Price. Each month it'll feature the titles we think will be flying off the shelves in the coming weeks, and it will also play host to exclusive news and competitions.

1

BATTLEZONE
(Activision)
£34.99


2

STARCRAFT
(Cendant)
£34.99


3

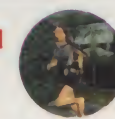
QUAKE II
(Activision)
£29.99


4

**GRAND THEFT
AUTO**
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5

TOMB RAIDER II
(Eidos Interactive)
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6

**CHAMPIONSHIP
MANAGER 2 97/98**
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Oi!

...Wilbur!

He was the biz guy behind *Doom*. He was the biz guy behind *Quake*. And now he's the biz guy behind *Unreal*. He's someone who's been integral to the rise and rise of the 3D shooter. **David McCandless** corners Jay Wilbur.



THE WORLD'S PRESS HAS GATHERED IN A hotel in Munich to witness the unveiling of a "feature-complete" version of *Unreal*, the longest-awaited game ever. It was trumpeted as a *Quake*-killer before *Quake* came out. And by now we've had not just *Quake*, but *Quake II*, *Jedi Knight*, *Hexen* and a bunch of other 3D shooters. *Unreal* has been a long time coming, but it's finally looking close to completion.

Jay Wilbur, of Epic Megagames – now employed as a "management advisory guy" – is jumping around the room, shouting, goading crazy foreign journalists to kill each other in a frenzied *Unreal* deathmatch. He's big, this American guy. He's tall and blond; he could be the scary deep-voiced one from *Hanson* 20 years on. He laughs and giggles, bellowing like a Klingon. Unlike most of the 'biz' guys and gals in the games world, Wilbur prefers the jeans and T-shirt look. He looks like maybe he should be a programmer, or a surfer, or one of those American tourists you see trailing around our fair hills with backpacks...

PC Zone: Okay, why is *Unreal* so late?

Jay Wilbur: The expectations of what they wanted to put into *Unreal*... they didn't have a firm grasp of what it would take to develop or fully realise them. It certainly could've come out earlier, but then it would be a lesser game. All of the gratuitous



(Left) The non-player characters in-game that you can either befriend or battle. Er, best go for the latter we think.



(Above) Scary goes on at night in the Unreal universe. (Right) The Unreal engine: multi-coloured lights and 16-bit colour.



effects, the great technology, the great AI, the cool network interface would have been lessened in some way. The decision was to halt and go for quality. To be honest with you, in terms of all the other games I've ever been involved with, *Unreal* is no different, just slightly later (laughs).

PCZ: *Unreal* has also been dogged with accusations that ideas have been stolen from other 3D shooters.

JW: Yeah, some loose cannon somewhere. It was weird. You're gonna put pixels on a screen in order to enjoy yourself and have fun, and then: hmmm, let's see... *That was Nolan Bushnell! You're ripping off the guy who invented Atari!* (laughs).

PCZ: Yeah, but at a show last year, for instance, 3D Realms, the makers of *Duke Nukem*, were showing off new 'portal

"What's unique to Unreal is the gameplay. The AI is at a level I've yet to see in a game."

technology'. Weeks later, *Unreal* suddenly had very similar 'portal technology'?

JW: It's a door (laughs). I don't understand what the big deal is. It's a door. Okay, so we've got doors in the game. Put it this way: if we're gonna do that, then does that mean that the *Prey* guys will have to go back and pay homage to the creators of *Doctor Who*?

PCZ: Terence Dicks?

JW: What?

PCZ: Never mind. The *Unreal* team started by teleworking from their homes – an unusual step. Did it work?

JW: No. That's probably one of the reasons why *Unreal* couldn't've been finished sooner. One of the things I did as a management consultant-type guy was to say: "Finish this up and find a frigging office somewhere. Let's go. This isn't working."

PCZ: Where did you get your level designers from?

JW: We got most of them from the Net. The guys who've excelled. Instead of flipping burgers or going to school earning a degree in medicine (laughs) they're designing levels.

PCZ: And your lead programmer and code god Tim Sweeney is still slaving away?

JW: Exactly. He's slaving away. He eats, sleeps, and drinks it.

PCZ: We heard that he was still living with his mum.

JW: No, he's in Waterloo, Canada. He doesn't need a lot – just so long as he's got a computer.

What's Your Game?





The sci-fi shoot 'em up equivalent of 'trouble at mill'.

◀ **PCZ:** If there was an intellectual showdown between Sweeney and iD's king coder John Carmack, who would win?

JW: You're not going to get me on that one (laughs). There would probably be a mutual respect between the two and they would probably hang out together. They might go and get drunk. Who knows? It would be very interesting to watch.

PCZ: Anyway, it's been a while, so bring us up to speed on the plot of *Unreal*.

JW: You're a prisoner on a prison ship which has just crashed on a planet. This planet has a massive gravitational pull – ships have crashed on to it for millions of years. Two races exist here: the indigenous Nahli race, who are very docile, and the Skaarj, a warrior race who crashed there years and years and years ago. The Nahli live in servitude to the Skaarj, who are using them to mine the natural resources and the resources of the ships which have crashed on the planet so they can get the hell out of there. And you realise that the only way you can get out of there is to steal that technology from the Skaarj. Through the game, you become friends with the Nahli so they'll help you. You can opt to harm them, but they will live in fear of you.

PCZ: It's almost two and a half years since the first *Unreal* demo dropped jaws to floors with its coloured lighting and all manner of special effects. But we're in a 3Dfx universe now – why should we care about another 3D shooter?

JW: It's different in a number of ways. Most of the other games – with the exception of *Jedi Knight* – rely on the same engine; most of those games are going to have similar capabilities. *Unreal* is the only one which breaks away from that. What's unique to *Unreal* is the gameplay. The artificial intelligence is at a level that I've yet to see in a game. The non-player characters, both the bad guys and the friendlies, react to you in such a way that you really feel like they're almost alive. And they range from big and stupid, straight on up to intelligence, with a hierarchy of authority. It's amazing to play.

PCZ: Just how clever are they?

JW: Very. One example would be: you walk into a room and there's a group of the enemy in front of you. Because you're in the shadows they can't see you. You notice they're talking to each other. If you make yourself known, the captain of the group will bark commands. The other guys scatter and he comes at you. And the guys he just commanded are coming at you from the front and from the side.

PCZ: What about multi-player?

JW: They're implementing a method of network play that will allow you to traverse game levels or servers similar, in a way, to how you traverse Internet World Wide Web pages. The analogy is that on the Web you have a page of graphical and textual links; you click on the button and it pings you over to another server which leads you to another five servers. In *Unreal*, each doorway can be a link to another level on another server. You'll never have to leave the game to find new content. It's not like you exit, find the utility, get the server and go

back in, it's all in the game. With context.

PCZ: Do you drive a Ferrari, like John Romero?

JW: I drive a pick-up truck.

PCZ: Different... Why did you leave iD?

JW: When I decided that the workload was going to kill me if I didn't make a change. I moved my family, bought some land in the country, put a house up to lead a simpler, easier life.

PCZ: Was it amicable?

JW: Oh yeah. We converse every now and then. We have a good time.

PCZ: What did you think of *Quake II*?

JW: To be honest with you, I haven't played a whole lot of it. I like *Quake I*, it's my big game. I just haven't had time. I'm not a great multi-player game fan. My Internet connection sucks, so I can't! Alright? I'm lucky to download a nudie picture. I'm on 19200 baud and they haven't heard of ISDN. I could get a satellite dish, but it's 400 one-way.

PCZ: Four hundred?

JW: Yeah, 400K per second in one direction. Still 19200 out. It's fine for people who are just clicking looking for nudie pictures, but I go both ways...

PCZ: Er...

JW: On the Internet.

PCZ: Glad you clarified that. So where's the *Unreal* engine going to be in two years' time?

JW: The possibilities of what the *Unreal* engine can do exist beyond games space. I'd like to see people like estate agents create walkthroughs for houses and show people on the Net – someone in New York interested in a house in California. Why go? You could do the whole damn thing, including the fire and fireplace. Right there. And put a couple of bad guys in (laughs).

PCZ: Will there be an *Unreal* demo?

JW: Yeah. The number of levels to be released on the Net has yet to be determined. I've always felt that the best advertisement for a game is the game itself. Nothing's going to sell more to a gamer who loves to play than the gameplay itself. There might be a network test, if Tim feels it's necessary. It's certainly a good thing to do, and has certainly proved worthwhile for the *Quake* and *Quake II* stuff.

PCZ: Will *Unreal* be as customisable as *Quake*?

JW: We're shipping a high-class editor with the game. All items have a set of properties. With a class structure. And you can go in and change the properties of that Skaarj warrior – in two minutes you can change him from an intelligent opponent into an idiot who gives you his weapon. A couple of button presses, a few slider moves and you're done.

PCZ: Lately, especially with *Quake II*, we've seen a bunch of developers who've released a buggy game and then squeezed out another ten 'point release' patches to correct their mistakes. Is *Unreal* going to do this?

JW: In their defence, the reality of the situation is this: there's an umpteenth number of computer designs with an infinite array of different utilities on them. It's not possible for a team the size of the *Unreal* team – or the iD team, or the *Jedi Knight* guys, or even Microsoft – to anticipate every possible bizarre brand hardware with bizarre brand utilities on it. So yeah, it's going to have to happen. What you need to worry about are the guys who don't do it, who don't give a shit and don't put the point releases out. The ones who do are the ones that are taking care of you, because they recognise that there's an issue that they didn't anticipate. Something came up which had to be fixed, so they fixed it.

PCZ: So when's *Unreal* going to be out?

JW: The game right now is feature complete. They're in the process of tightening it up, making sure it works on the baseline 166MMX, 32Mb box. They're also tuning up the networking code to make sure that it works. A lot of pieces are being put together. Let's just say "real soon". 2



AI-enhanced monsters attack from all angles.



(Top to bottom) The darker, scarier levels; big clever flies at the forefront of *Unreal*'s AI; scary bipedal monsters.

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First

Encounter



Grim Fandango

WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN you cross Mexican folklore, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *The Big Sleep* and a bunch of chilled cadavers? A whopping great grant from the Arts Council, probably. Either that or LucasArts' *Grim Fandango*. Charlie Brooker extrapolates.

DEATH: IT COMES TO US ALL. TRY AS YOU might, there's no wriggling out of it. Sure, you can pound the streets in your jogging bottoms; you can subsist on a diet of Yakult, Bran Flakes and organic celery; you can visit every homeopathic, aromatherapeutic, acupuncture-tastic two-bit charlatan in town; but you're still going to croak it some day. Whatever starry-eyed worldly ambitions you might be nurturing, your ultimate destiny is to lie underground in an overpriced wooden casket, your eye sockets filled to the brim with squirming maggots, their little wormy gobs crammed to bursting point as they gorge nonchalantly on your putrefied flesh.

The reason for all this grim chit-chat? Why, it's *Grim Fandango* from LucasArts, m'lud. It's their latest entry in a long line of distinguished graphic adventures which have included such classics as *Sam And Max*, *Day Of The Tentacle*, and their recent click-buster *The Curse Of Monkey Island*. The brainchild of *Full Throttle* creator Tim Schafer, *Grim Fandango* looks set to be somewhat darker than previous happy-go-lucky adventures. Which isn't to say it's a frown-a-minute exercise in morbid contemplation; it's all a bit quirkier than that. Think of the tone that runs through Tim Burton's *Nightmare Before Christmas* and you're bang on track.

You take command of Manny Calavera, travel agent for the recently deceased. Manny's job is to take people from the Land of the Living to the Land of the Dead, via a four-year package holiday through the shadowy underworld. As the game begins, Manny finds himself falling victim to a convoluted embezzlement plot which prevents him from getting hold of the correct corpses. In desperation, he steals a living human, jeopardising not only his career but also the fate of his own soul.

Inspired by classic '50s film noir and ancient Mexican mythology, and spanning a four-year time scale, *Grim Fandango* certainly sounds like it could be the deepest LucasArts game yet. It's certainly the most visually ambitious, being their first graphic adventure to use 3D characters and locations.

Here at PC Zone we think *Grim Fandango* looks absolutely fantastic, and we're absolutely chomping at the bit to receive a fully playable version. Furthermore, you it's a safe bet that when the final game eventually arrives at the Zone dungeon there'll be much childish cat-fighting and name-calling over who will be lucky enough to get to review it. Vote for me, readers. Vote for me. **Z**



LucasArts' decision to make *Grim Fandango* their first 3D graphic adventure looks like it might have paid off – it's ever so pwetty.



The finished game is all set to be LucasArts' darkest title yet, as indicated by these moody development sketches.



The wacky vehicles from the game were inspired by the cartoons of Ed 'Big Daddy' Roth.



Product details

Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Release date: TBC
Website: www.vie.co.uk

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HEN WE ASKED PATRICK McCarthy to look into scouting some foreign talent and choosing a fine leg, he looked excited.

When we told him it was a cricket management game he seemed suddenly deflated.

SPORTS MANAGEMENT GAMES HAVE WHAT you might call an uneven distribution. While football management games are more common than estate agents with serious personality defects, and American sports are well represented, badminton, luge and darts management games are extremely thin on the ground. It makes you think, doesn't it?

Cricket management is another under-represented area. There was *Robin Smith's Cricket* a few years back, but it was shite. So it's big news for cricket fans that Empire Interactive have decided to produce *International Cricket Captain*. Although it has 'Captain' in the title, you won't actually get to play any cricket yourself – think of it as a Mike Brearley simulator. It's strictly management and tactics: you take control of a County side, hire coaches, scout new talent and bring in highly-paid overseas stars.


But why no arcade element? "Because we wanted to keep the stats as accurate as possible, so that players play according to their ability rather than the gameplayer's ability," says Chris Child, designer and lead programmer. "And also because we wanted it to be able to play really quickly. You can choose the level at which you'll watch highlights – just wickets; all scoring shots; batsmen playing and missing; boundaries; whatever. In this way you can get through a Test match in about ten minutes, or you can watch at a ball-by-ball level."

There are no footie management-style ratings, instead you have to be judged entirely from their real-life stats. Control options are extensive. "You decide how aggressive a bowler will be and tell him what line to bowl, then set your field accordingly," says Child. So if you set a tight off-side field and asked Dean Headley to bowl to it, you'd get hammered? "Possibly, yes."

You can check out anything from the number of dropped catches to the number of times a batsman's played and missed, to the number of LBW appeals he's survived (which is none if he's English and if Steve Bucknor's officiating). Icons show the pitch and outfield condition, the state of the ball and light. You can even overlay your field placings with scoring and non-scoring strokes to see if you've got people where they're hitting the ball. (Although you can't, as yet, put someone in the street outside when Caddick's bowling.)

At the moment there's just an English version. "But we're working on a South African and an Australian version too," says Child.

What, there isn't going to be a French version? "No."

The first game to get the hallowed *Wisden* endorsement, it features more than 2200 players and has commentary by Jonathan Agnew. We'll have a full review next issue, out Thursday 14 May. 

International Cricket Captain

Look at that graphical detail. Write and tell us which ones are wearing boxes and win money.



Set individual fields for each batsman. You might like to push people in to swear at Graeme Hick and make him cry, for example.



Watch the inexorable rise in the batsman's total against the balls faced. And wonder again why you picked Andy Caddick.



Product details

Developer: Empire Interactive

Publisher: Empire Interactive

Release Date: Spring

Website: www.empireinteractive.com

is it pool?



No. But it is one of those games you just have to dip into time and time again. Hard to explain, difficult to put down, Wetrix is the water based solution to your gaming needs. Play it on your own or against friends and you'll be hooked from the very start.



wetrix

DROP EVERYTHING



THE COMPLEXITY OF A simulation with the pace of an arcade game. Paul Presley looks at a helicopter sim that caters for everyone (except people who hate helicopters, obviously).

IF MARK HANNIS IS READING THESE WORDS, let me tell you that you're a son of a bitch. About five years ago I lent him a copy of a rather smart flight sim called *ATAC* and I've never seen it since. I've barely seen Mark since either, so I can only assume that the two of them are very happy together somewhere, living a life of luxury at my expense.

Anyhow, I mention it only because I'm reminded of the old MicroProse title as I sit watching one of the chaps from Simis take me through a demo of *Team Apache*, the latest entry into the once barren but now thriving helicopter simulation genre. That and because I enjoy settling old scores in public.

Team Apache, according to the developers, is not being pitched at the hard-core simulation crowd – the kind of people for whom power-to-weight ratios and four-blade rotor handling specs are as sexy as any naked supermodel. Nor is it taking the NovaLogic road and classifying itself as arcade, arcade. The company line is that heavyweight sims are boring, and lightweight arcade games are too unrealistic, so *TA* is attempting to slot into a middle ground.

The actual helicopter dynamics are said to be spot on. And while this is a boast that just about every helicopter sim makes, Simis are backing it up with graphics that compliment the engine. It supports just about every 3D card there is (including the brand new Voodoo 2 architecture – see page 127), and even at this stage we have to admit that it does look very smart indeed – especially the level of detail they've put into city areas. The buildings are some of the finest outside *Sim City*, and the streets are alive with everyday life, with civilian cars and trucks going about their business, oblivious to the death and destruction you're unleashing all around them.

The similarities to the aforementioned *ATAC* come mainly because you're not just limited to a pilot's role. Between missions you have to manage your team's resources, keeping the supplies and equipment stores up, assigning repair crews to different tasks, and taking care of your troops, all of whom have individual statistics and emotional levels. It's up to you to pick the right crews for the right missions and to make sure that spirits are kept high. The last thing you want is a manic depressive pilot who starts questioning his role in life's grand plan right in the middle of a heated battle with Colombian drug lords.

The one area that Simis may have to look at is their attitude towards the heavyweight simulations. Early press releases seem to imagine the majority of the populace think hard-core sims are boring. But nothing could be further from the truth. *Team Apache* has enough potential realism within it to be able to take on any of the 'established' sims. It would be a shame if a prejudiced attitude towards the competition were to end up alienating them from a larger audience. 2

Team Apache

Downtown Colombia: apparently there's a football stadium in there somewhere if you fancy a quick break.



A fully working 3D cockpit lets you keep track of what's going on at all times.



Explosions are very nicely handled, with full buffeting effects on your helicopter if you get too close.



Team Simis: don't look now but...



Product details

Developer: Simis

Publisher: Mindscape

Release date: June

Website: www.mindscape.com

THERE ARE OTHER GOAL BASED GAMES TO PLAY THIS YEAR

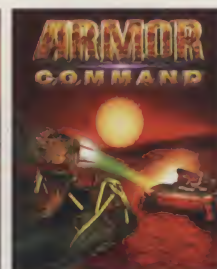


FOR THIS ONE YOU ARE GOING TO NEED A STRONGER DEFENCE

A Sci-fi action feast set across 48 Blockbuster levels of interplanetary armageddon. Strategic game play unfolds in a volatile 3-D universe of exploitation and alien culture.

www.take2europe.com

The eagerly awaited new game from Edward Kilham, the Co-Designer of **X-Wing™** and **Tie-Fighter™**





Just as LucasArts prepare to release their *Star Wars*-based strategy game, MicroProse announce further details of a new turn-based strategy game set within the *Star Trek* universe. **Jeremy Wells** is our man on the bridge.

AT A TIME WHEN THE REAL-TIME STRATEGY C&C clone is so popular (see feature on page 48), it might seem strange that MicroProse have opted to make their first foray into the strategy genre using the *Star Trek: Next Generation* license a turn-based affair.

As LucasArts release *Supremacy*, their first strategy game set within the *Star Wars* universe, to a somewhat mixed response, it's pretty clear that for many sci-fi fans a real-time strategy game that marries a familiar C&C-style interface with units they know and love is a potential must-buy. While more complex strategy games such as *Masters Of Orion* are popular, it would seem quite obvious that a C&C-style *Star Wars* or *Star Trek* game would have mass appeal. "We didn't want to produce just another *Command & Conquer* clone," argues Jeff Holzhauer, *Birth Of The Federation's* producer. "We wanted to do something a little different that was more suited to the *Star Trek Next Generation* movies."

He's got a point. A standard *Star Wars*-meets-C&C clone presumably wouldn't be too difficult to produce (are you listening, LucasArts?), whereas *Star Trek* is a very different world. While the aim of the game is essentially to 'boldly go', the option to control one of the five major *Star Trek* alliances (the Federation, Romulans, Klingons, Ferengi and Cardassians) means there's potentially high replay value to be had while exploring deep space, and at the same time allocating resources for building up planetary defence, star fleets, technological advances and trade will no doubt prove a serious and intense challenge to *Next Generation* and strategy fans alike.

As far as combat goes, preparation is the key to success, with the emphasis on long-term strategy, resource management, formations and overall tactics rather than hands-on click and command. If it sounds a bit dull, the fact that the developers are using a customised version of the *Falcon* engine to portray what's going on should hopefully liven things up on-screen, although this remains to be seen.

But why not real-time? "We wanted to put as much emphasis on exploration, resource management and diplomacy as on combat," maintains Jeff. "If we did it in real time it would just be too complex and complicated to handle. In many ways it's more like *Civ* or *Masters Of Orion* - you gotta have a strategy which can evolve. You've got to prepare and plan what you do. It's a lot deeper than your average C&C clone. We want to draw the player into the rich world of *Star Trek*. Combat's not primarily what *Star Trek* is all about. It's about exploring unknown universes populated with a multitude of races, making decisions and reacting to encounters and events in the right way. We want our game to reflect that."

Star Trek: The Next Generation - Birth Of The Federation

BOTF is a turn-based, multi-player strategy game of space exploration, expansion and tactical combat.



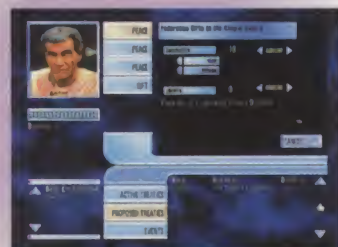
Each alliance will have different abilities, strengths and weakness. For example: the Ferengi excel at trading and economics, and the Klingons have bonuses for combat.



BOTF supports five-way LAN and Internet play.



You control one of five races in the *Star Trek* universe - there are 30 other minor races to contend with too.



Quick mode leaves it to the computer, as you watch the battle, whereas in detailed mode you can give orders on a turn-by-turn basis.


Product details

Developer: MicroProse US

Publisher: MicroProse

Release date: June '98

Website: www.microprose.com



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CLONE



(Left) Westwood's decision to use 'voxels' rather than polygons means they can get a lot of detail into *Tiberian Sun* without too much fear of slow-down.

WAR



AT LONG LAST...

COMMAND &

CONQUER 2:

TIBERIAN SUN!

HOOHAY! HURRAH!

EVERYONE'S ECSTATIC! SO, ER,

WHY ISN'T CHARLIE BROOKER

LEAPING UP AND DOWN WITH

EXCITEMENT JUST YET?

EH? EH?!

A

ND LO, WESTWOOD STUDIOS FINALLY RELEASED information and shots of *Tiberian Sun*, the keenly-anticipated sequel to the genre creating *Command & Conquer* to much rejoicing and jubilation. After wetting our appetite with a high resolution Windows 95 version of the original game, a pseudo sequel in the form of *Red Alert* and numerous add-on discs and the rather dire on-line only *Sole Survivor*, are we at long last about to see the fruits of the last three years' labours?

If we're to believe the hype, then we're in for a treat. In the finest sequel tradition *Tiberian Sun* is sure to herald a landslide of new units, massive improvements to the gameplay, prettier graphics... indeed, more or less everything bar a group of nude celebrity cheerleaders on the sidelines. Given the phenomenal worldwide success of the previous C&C titles, *Tiberian Sun's* blockbuster status is pretty much guaranteed.

Or is it? Could it be that with a large number of high-quality 'clones' also in the offing, Westwood are about to become victims of their own incredible success? Have arch rivals Cavedog beaten them at their own game? In short, are Westwood capable of producing a game that will live up to the gaming community's massive expectations?

POINT & KILL ADVENTURES

Let's waft dreamily back through the feathery, translucent veils of time for a moment, back to a time when the phrases 'real-time', 'strategic', and 'war game' held about as much in common as the words 'perceptive', 'illuminating' and 'Denise Van Outen' do today. A time when if you wanted to play with computerised squadrons, you had to be prepared to spend hours gazing at a landscape broken up into hexahedrons, plotting your every move at a pace normally reserved for the decomposition of dead sperm whales. A time when the only people who were into PC war gaming all wore trousers that stank like a mouldering towel.

These were the days BC&C (before *Command & Conquer*). Grim times indeed. The nearest substitute was Sensible Software's *Cannon Fodder*, which was quite a laugh, but only allowed the player to control one unit at a time. Westwood's *Dune 2* had already amassed a cult following, but it wasn't until they transmogrified it into C&C that everything literally went ballistic. The pie-simple interface, the snappy pace, the readily-comprehensible resource management elements, the dinky tanks: everything gelled perfectly, and the game was rightfully declared an instant classic by just about everyone who came within sniffing distance of the damn thing.

If you could use a mouse, then you too could be an armchair general, without feeling like some kind of freakish übernerd. Westwood had

(Left and below) As before, *Tiberian Sun* will sport highly polished cut scenes. (Bottom) The coloured lighting and explosions certainly look the business.





(Above) Westwood have intimated that there won't be any ships in the sequel, but there will be plenty of new units to play with.

single-handedly, miraculously rendered war gaming 'sexy'. The Bitmap Brothers, whose much-delayed, conceptually-similar *Z* was released in C&C's shadow, must have been kicking themselves silly.

Gamers who completed C&C were treated to a droolsome trailer advertising a mysterious product called *Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun*. Little did we realise then just how long we'd have to wait before this *Sun* would finally poke its nose over the horizon. Now, almost three years later, could we be preparing for a false dawn?

THE CLONE RANGERS

Ironically, the problem rests with *Command & Conquer's* incredible success. The PC gaming community, having had its appetite for warmongering thoroughly whetted by the Westwood blockbuster, clamoured for more – and software houses weren't slow to pick up on this. Within a few months a deluge of suspiciously similar titles began to appear. An entire genre developed, apparently overnight: suddenly the RTS (Real Time Strategy) game was everywhere, in a number of different guises. By the time Westwood released *Red Alert* (an improved 'prequel' to C&C), the clone wars had begun in earnest. We had post-apocalyptic clones (*KKND: Krush, Kill 'N' Destroy*), highbrow sci-fi clones (*M.A.X.*), genetic engineering clones (*Gene Wars*) and even weirdy-beardy Tolkien clones (*Blood And Magic*). You almost couldn't hear yourself think for the sound of frantic mouse-clicks and bellowed swear words. But despite the onslaught of similar titles, the *Command & Conquer* games reigned supreme as the undisputed champions of the genre. Or at least they *did*. Then Cavedog released *Total Annihilation* and the goalposts were moved overnight.

SEE YA LATER, 'NIIHLATOR

While everyone else was content to emulate, developers

ARMY MEN (3DO/UBI SOFT)



instead, toys like *Cyberpunk Crackhouse* and *Serial Killer In My Pocket* get the kids cranked up to bursting point, while the only bona fide soldiers available all have names like *Corporal Hardnut*, with hunting knives for fingers and radioactive eyes that pop out on stalks and spit hydrochloric acid at innocent civilians. And those are just the female ones. The male models simply explode as you pull them out of the box, taking your hand off and embedding hot nails in your face. We live in an unpleasant world, folks.

3DO's *Army Men* looks set to drag the green plastic troops firmly back in vogue. Doubtless inspired by certain scenes from Disney's *Toy Story*, it's perhaps got more in common with *Cannon Fodder* than C&C: the player only controls one unit throughout the game – a sergeant who issues orders to his troops. A promising concept, and a weird one to boot.

Everyone used to play with a set of green plastic soldiers during their formative years. In fact, ownership of a healthy battalion of inexpensive synthetic infantrymen was compulsory: they were issued to families by a jittery post-war Government; any children who *didn't* play with theirs were beaten with shoes until their eyes bled. The cheap and cheerful polymer troops were designed to encourage carefree emulation of the shocking, unbelievable carnage of the battlefields of Tobruk in the comfort of your own suburban bedroom. Nowadays, plastic soldiers are passé:



Pros: Inherent nostalgia value for overgrown kiddiwinks. Simple one-man-at-a-time interface and units with specialised skills

Cons: May turn out to be little more than a poor man's *Cannon Fodder 3*

Missions: 20

Units: 20+

Multiple players: Yes

Will the AI be any good?: Apparently units will react to what's going on on the battlefield

Release date: June '98

MECHCOMMANDER (MICROPROSE)



When Ted Hughes wrote his haunting, poetic novella *The Iron Man*, he probably *didn't* have *MechWarrior* in mind, but what the hey: it's all been terribly successful anyway. Now here's the latest entry into the ongoing saga: *MechCommander*, the first BattleTech RTS title. Utilising an isometric perspective, and with a greater emphasis on resource management than you might expect (with dismantling and 'recycling' the enemy rather than outright destruction apparently being a key factor), it all sounds rather enticing, especially if you're already a fan of the series. For a more lengthy discussion of its potential merits, see our preview on page 56.



Pros: *MechWarrior* meets C&C! The developers reckon it contains more animation than any game, ever. Units will improve with experience. It's got the huge FASA BattleTech licence behind it. Customisable interface and AI

Cons: 3D landscaping, but as for the mechs... we're talking pre-rendered sprites here

Missions: 30

Units: 18 mechs and loads of different add-ons

Multiple players: Yes, but no numbers yet

Will the AI be any good?: It utilises something called ABL (Artificial Brain Language), so it had better be

Release date: Summer '98

KKND 2: KOLLATERAL DAMAGE (INFOGRAMS/BEAM)



KKND stands for *Krush, Kill 'N' Destroy*, by the way, just in case any of you were in any doubt as to whether or not the game contains scenes of violence. Coming your way from Aussie development house Beam Software (previously responsible for perhaps the finest moment in videogaming history – *Horace Goes Skiing* on the Sinclair ZX Spectrum), *KKND2* is set 40 years after events in the original game, which attentive readers will recall was set in

the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust. As before, the game pitches 'Survivors' (human beings who hid out in bunkers) against 'Mutants' (poor saps who remained on the surface, and grew extra limbs on their faces and stuff) in a frenzy of blood-letting and

violence, except this time around both sides have 'evolved' – which means more units, bigger arsenals, and far, far more killing.

The original *KKND* wasn't exactly a runaway success here in Blighty, so the sequel will have to try extra hard to impress. To this end, Beam are promising proper line of sight 'fog of war', three new terrain types, "advanced AI", and a veritable avalanche of levels – 65 in all. Another promising addition is the proposed 'unit editor', which will enable hawkish spods to tweak individual characteristics with a view to creating the – ahem – 'ultimate killing machine'.

Pros: Distinctive post-apocalyptic background scenario. Bumloads of missions. Unit editor. From the makers of *Horace Goes Skiing*

Cons: The original was robust but unremarkable; many gamers ignored it – is the sequel likely to fare any better?

Missions: 65 (45 single, 20 multi-player)

Units: "Loads more"

Multiple players: Up to eight

Will the AI be any good?: Allegedly, yes

Release date: Spring '98

AGE OF EMPIRES II (MICROSOFT)

Back in issue 54 we awarded the original *Age Of Empires* a whopping great 94 percent score – the same figure we dished out to *Red Alert*, numerology fans. For some time, Microsoft had been attempting to muscle in on the gaming market, with little or no success; *AOE* represented their first major coup. While not exactly a *C&C* clone (while there are similarities, it's got as much in common with *Civilization*), *Age Of Empires* nonetheless made for a similarly enthralling experience, especially in multi-player mode. The sequel will feature a rotatable map, much improved visuals (as you can see from these luvverly shots), and 13 new civilisations to choose from (including – allegedly – us Brits). Microsoft must be hoping that *Age Of Empires II* will mark the moment when they're finally taken seriously as a games publisher. And if their past record is anything to go by, there won't be any stopping them then. All hail King Bill! All hail King Bill! All hail King Bill! (That's enough Bill-hailing, you creep – Ed)



Pros: Real depth for those who *luurve* the resource management side of things
Cons: Possibly a little too *History Today* for some
Missions: It's all one big on-going campaign – but there will be skirmish missions
Units: No concrete figures yet, but with 13 new 'teams' to choose from, expect this number to be huuuuge
Multiple players: Again, no final number, but the original's 8-way support is likely to be increased
Will the AI be any good?: It was in the original, so *AOE2*'s is bound to be smarter still
Release date: Autumn '98

WAR OF THE WORLDS (RAGE)



"The chances of anything coming from Mars are a million to one... but still, they come." So sang a gaggle of larynxes during Jeff Wayne's seminal rock opera adaptation of HG Wells' *War of the Worlds*. Of course, that was composed over twenty years ago; recently, a team of crack spods claimed to have discovered a Martian fossil at the North Pole, shortening the odds of a potential Martian invasion considerably. Today, in fact, "the chances of anything coming from Mars" are probably more like eight to one, but that wouldn't make for such a dramatic lyric. And it wouldn't scan properly either.

But sod that. We're supposed to be discussing the game here. And

War Of The Worlds is quite a tasty prospect. Set in turn-of-the-century Britain, it pitches us humans (based in London, armed with a bizarre selection Victorian contraptions and vehicles) against them Martians (who have laid their nest in Scotland, and are ravaging the countryside in dastardly spider-legged mechanisms). It's all been the brainchild of Jeff Wayne himself, apparently, and it will also come complete with a re-recorded version of his 'popular' musical masterpiece. With remixes by hip young men with goatee beards and camouflage trousers and names like DJ E-Z Piss and Bandito Man. Or not.

Pros: Another big licence and an intriguing concept. It's all set in Blighty! Yaaay! *Rage* were also responsible for the altogether lovely *Incoming*
Cons: Jeff Wayne/HG Wells's estate can veto any aspects they don't like
Missions: It's all one big ongoing campaign; the map's split into 30 'bits'
Units: Plenty of charmingly 'retro' ones
Multiple players: Yes
Will the AI be any good?: According to *Rage*, yes. Like, duuuuh!!!
Release date: Summer '98

DUNE 2000 (WESTWOOD)



Westwood's decision to re-model their classic *Dune 2* is, to be honest, rather baffling. It's the videogaming equivalent of the re-released *Star Wars* movies: same old material, dipped in a spangly new coating. There's a spanking new multi-player mode, and some more missions,

but the bulk of the content is recycled. Make no mistake: *Dune 2* was a great game – but will the newbies be impressed – and will the old fans really want to play it all over again? The multi-player aspect is undoubtedly a great addition – but is it enough?

Pros: A proven classic
Cons: At the end of the day it's just an update of an existing game, albeit a great one
Missions: 27
Units: Three races, each with a full complement of units
Multiple players: Up to eight
Will the AI be any good?: Likely to be similar to *C&C*, we reckon
Release date: May '98

READER RESPONSE

It seems that not everyone is going ape over *Tiberian Sun*. We posted a message on the Zone website and asked readers to comment. We also invited Westwood to respond, but they failed to comment. Here are just a few of the reader responses we received.

♦ I thought the shots looked cool, but if there are no naval units I'm disappointed. I understand the plot is that the world's population is now living at the poles due to Tiberian infestation everywhere else, so surely some water-based action would take place? Arse. I loved the cruisers in *Red Alert*.
gort@globalnet.co.uk

♦ Is it a fully rotatable and tilttable affair? If not – pants. Should still be good though if it's anything like the original (more of the same but better-looking).
pheffern@cs.strath.ac.uk

♦ There should definitely be a rotatable view which uses 3D accelerator cards. And if there aren't any naval units then there should definitely be a wide range of airborne units. And possibly an option to control your units like in *Dungeon Keeper* and *Battlezone* would be cool.
pebied@dircon.co.uk

♦ Voxels are like, ugh, 'orrible – in my opinion. Isn't it about time they caught up with the 20th century while we're still in it? The little cut-scene shots look extraordinarily nice, but the game still looks like *Red Alert*. It doesn't seem to have changed much, except they've put a night-time mode in, haven't they? If they've removed boats, that's a plus; they were utter bollocks in *Red Alert*. Basically it just looks like *Red Alert* but with a different perspective, and bigger "Voxels".
akimber@globalnet.co.uk

♦ If they are voxels they'll look like that game *Tumblebugs*, in my opinion. *Tumblebugs* is great but it uses voxels for speed. I don't see why *C&C* would need that kind of speed. And anyway, if Cavedog can make all those little polygons fly around the screen and still include line of sight and environmental effects, why can't Westwood?
candyandco@tinet.ie

♦ Sigh... I just think this whole genre has been a bit overdone now. I thought *Total Annihilation* was good, and the terrain and polygons added a lot to it, but it was still only a variant of *C&C* or *Dune* at the end of the day.
andrew.parrott@diamond.co.uk

♦ To tell the truth, I was massively underwhelmed. It looks just like *Red Alert* with coloured lighting. Just what have Westwood been doing for the last three years or however long it is since the original game came out?
jeff_root@lineone.net

NB: Point your browser at www.PCZONE.co.uk to see more reader reaction and give us your view.



Oh you pretty thing: *Tiberian Sun's* fancy coloured lighting in full effect. Eehh, it's just like *Top Of The Pops*.

◀ Cavedog set out to innovate. And they succeeded. *Total Annihilation* had one major improvement which the other C&C clones lacked: it was the only 3D clone. To date, and almost without exception everyone else had used sprites whereas *Total Annihilation* used polygon-based units. Everyone else went with a flat terrain: *Total Annihilation* had proper peaks and troughs. More than a mere stylistic change, the switch to 3D terrain and units, coupled with the then-unique 3D 'line of sight' ushered in swathes of new strategic concerns – such as weighing the advantages and disadvantages inherent in perching atop hills (good for taking pot-shots at ground troops below, not so hot when the enemy fighter pilots come looking for you).

There were other innovations too, such as the introduction of the 'commander' unit (which was basically 'you'), but perhaps the other most significant factor in *Total Annihilation's* ongoing success was Cavedog's commitment to gamers with an Internet account. Webbed-up *Annihilation* fans arriving at the dedicated website are rewarded with a slew of downloadable missions, units, and upgrades for the game, as well as the opportunity to play online against fellow warmongering psychopaths. It's been a phenomenal success: apparently www.totalannihilation.com is now the third most visited gaming site in the world. Westwood are doubtless taking notes and looking to improve their own Westwood chat facility.

So how does this affect the fortunes of *Tiberian Sun*? Well, there are two major factors to be borne in mind here: firstly, *Tiberian Sun* is likely to find itself head-to-head against *Total Annihilation II*, currently in development at Cavedog. Secondly, and most significantly, the reaction to much of what's been reported regarding *Tiberian Sun* is on the face of it, rather underwhelming and somewhat disappointing (see Reader Response panel on previous page).

WARGAMES (EA/MGM INTERACTIVE)



Nuclear paranoia meets techno-fear head on in this 1983 movie thriller as Matthew Broderick — armed only with a TRS-80, a 9600-baud modem, and a penchant for cyber-tomfoolery — almost triggers Armageddon from his bedroom, apparently in an attempt to impress Ally Sheedy (who, frankly, wasn't *that* nice in the first place). The impending holocaust is eventually averted in favour of a standard-issue feelgood ending, but not before every single impressionable child in the audience has been chilled to the marrow by David Warner's bleak, joyless diatribes on mankind's inexorable descent towards self-destruction. This is what family

movies used to be like in the days before *Free Willy*.

Anyway, that's the movie. And now, fifteen years later, we're offered *WarGames* — the game, set twenty years after the events in the film. The player takes the role of a web surfer who *thinks* he's playing an online game, until "the line between fantasy and reality blurs..." and hey-ho, we're stuck in the middle of a man-versus-machine fight to the death. *WarGames* promises to deliver the "pulse-pounding excitement of being on the front lines" — without, presumably, actually shooting the player in the thigh in the name of realism. It all takes place from a first - or third - person perspective, a la the recent *Uprising*, and features special units such as dedicated troops of hackers. Unusual, n'est pas?

Pros: Unusual 3D perspective (a little like *Uprising*), with accelerator card support. Real-time weather effects. Securing the *WarGames* licence was a shrewd move...
Cons: However, on the face of it, they've changed the scenario so much, they needn't have bothered
Missions: 30
Units: 50 different ones
Multiple players: Up to four
Will the AI be any good?: Apparently it represents "the ultimate combat strategy AI". But of course it does
Release date: Summer '98

TOTAL ANNIHILATION II (CAVEDOG)



No official details yet, so the following is naught but speculation, but any fool could tell you that *Total Annihilation II* is likely to accentuate many of its predecessor's strengths. Given *TA's* successful use of 'proper' 3D, we wouldn't be too surprised to see a fully-rotational 3D playing field — possibly similar to the one used in *Dark Omen* — introduced for the sequel. There's no reason why a first-person view for the Commander should be out of the question, either. *Total Annihilation's* healthy on-line presence is more than likely to be built upon too, with leagues, clans, and tournaments likely to become a permanent fixture.

The soon-to-be-released strap-on pack, *Core Contingency*, should offer a few clues for the sequel. It's going to feature a whole host of new units (bringing the grand total to a hulking 225), including attack hovercraft, amphibious K-bots, and minelayers. More significantly, perhaps, it'll come complete with a fully-fledged level editing program. We predict that the sequel will feature some *Quake*-style 'open architecture' — enabling players to design and construct their own units, then upload them onto the Internet. Although of course, we could be completely wrong. wrong.wrong.mistaken.

Pros: *Total Annihilation* was better than *Command and Conquer*: will *TA2* beat *C&C2*? 3D line of sight, 3D terrain, 3D units... 3D everything. That formidable web presence and loads of player feedback.
Cons: Chris Taylor, lead designer on the original *Total Annihilation* recently left Cavedog to pursue his own projects
Missions: If there's an editor, potentially infinite
Units: *TA* had nearly 200...
Multiple players: Yes
Will the AI be any good?: The original's was pretty good, so...
Release date: Christmas '98

COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES (EIDOS INTERACTIVE)



sailors comes tantalisingly close. But I digress.

The fact is that through our retrospective, rose-coloured glasses, WWII is a thoroughly entertaining prospect. Dastardly Germans, stiff-upper-lipped British

World War II may have been one of the bloodiest, most traumatic periods of modern history, but hey! It made for some *great* movies, right? Nothing beats blobbing out on a lazy Sunday afternoon with a big bag of tortilla chips, a tub of medium-strength salsa, and *Where Eagles Dare* on the television. Well, almost nothing anyway; bouncing around on a spacehopper in a room full of baby oil and bare-chested

generals with bristling 'taches, cigar-chomping Lee Marvin-a-like yankee commandos... there's just so much *character* there. Which is probably why Pyro Studios have seen fit to produce *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines*, which sounds as if it may turn out a bit like Microsoft's *Close Combat* — with each soldier possessing individual personality and AI, so they'll occasionally do 'realistic' things, like running away screaming — but played out at breakneck speed. According to the pre-release hype the game "combines strategy and action in a new concept called real time tactics". Which is marketing speak for "Command & Conquer clone". We'll have to wait until May before we discover whether or not it's actually any cop.

Pros: Evocative World War II scenario. Individual 'personality' for each soldier
Cons: Sprite-based characters
Missions: 24
Units: 50
Multiple players: Yes, but no numbers at present
Will the AI be any good?: Aside from having their own personalities, the soldiers also come equipped with "virtual sensing". Which means they can hear as well as see
Release date: May '98

DOMINION (ION STORM/SIDDS INTERACTIVE)



Ion Storm's first game will *not* be the long-awaited *Daikatana* – instead it's a game with another long 'd' word for a title, *Dominion*. Unpleasant Sisters of Mercy connotations aside, it should be worth a gander – after all, Jon Romero's boys will want to prove themselves worthy with their initial release. Ignore the nonsensical story-line and concentrate on the geek details: ultra high-res. graphics, four available 'sides' to choose from, weird and wonderful units, and allegedly ground-breaking AI routines. For the full, explicit, lowdown, flip to Macca's preview on page 65.



Pros: From the promising Ion Storm team. Sophisticated AI. Easy to use interface
Cons: Hardly ground-breaking
Missions: More than 60
Units: No, definite numbers yet, but loads
Multiple players: Up to eight
Will the AI be any good?: According to Ion Storm it's "revolutionary"
Release date: May '98

ARMOUR COMMAND (TAKE 2)

Think *C&C* in 3D and you've more or less tagged *Armour Command*. Billed as an "easy-to-use, fast-paced strategy game", it really *is* very similar to Westwood's blockbuster... but viewed from a constantly shifting 3D perspective. Initial reactions to the demo in the *Zone* office were mixed, but with an ex-*X-Wing* project leader designing the missions (and indeed, a whole host of ex-LucasArts bods on board), this game really can't be ignored...



Pros: Allegedly simple to use. That LucasArts connection
Cons: Despite the fact that it's all in 3D, the playing area itself is 'flat' – ie you can't climb hills. It's coming at ya via Ripcord and Take 2 – previously responsible for excruciatingly poor massacre-em-up *Postal*
Missions: 44
Units: 20
Multiple players: Up to four of 'em
Will the AI be any good?: They reckon it will. But they haven't said *why*.
Release date: April '98

When we reviewed *Total Annihilation* back in issue 55, we stated that "you can bet your bum-fluff that *C&C2* will be in 3D spinny-round-o-vision", adding that "*Total Annihilation* is actually better than *Command & Conquer*." And why was it better? "There are numerous technical reasons that make the game better... like the fact that it has proper 3D terrain so that you can hide units in valleys or set up artillery on hilltops to gain an advantage. Or that it operates a 'line of sight' model that prevents units from seeing round corners or over hills. Or that all of the units in the game are constructed from polygons rather than sprites so you can see the way the terrain affects them as they trundle around."

Judging by the information made available, those 'plus points' we singled out are unlikely to be included in *Tiberian Sun*. Project leader Erik Yeo has been quoted as saying that despite the introduction of 3D terrain, 3D line-of-sight and elevation issues probably won't be a factor because they create a "nebulous advantage" and confuse the player. As for polygons, forget it: the *Tiberian Sun* units are constructed from voxels – those three-dimensional pixels so beloved of Novalogic. What's more, there's talk that there won't be any ships in the sequel because they allegedly unbalance the multi-player game and end up splitting the maps. What's that all about then?

COMMAND & FESTER?

So what aspects are Westwood concentrating on? Well, it seems that this time around, the landscape



(Above) It's GDI versus the Brotherhood of Nod again... who's going to come out on top this time around?

"ONE ESPECIALLY NEAT PROPOSITION IS THE WAY IN WHICH YOUR TROOPS WILL GAIN 'EXPERIENCE' AS THEY FIGHT."

M.A.X. II (INTERPLAY)



The original title was a tad too highbrow for some, but this latest incarnation of Interplay's sci-fi strat-em-up will attempt to bridge the gap between arcade simplicity and egghead complexity thanks to an

accessible control system and an utterly delightful engine which allows the player to zoom in and out of the action on the fly. The action revolves around an all-out intergalactic, inter-species war and features more than eight different types of creature to tinker about with, from gigantic robot hedgehog-a-likes, to oddball floating manta rays. Keep 'em peeled for a full review next month.

Pros: Eye-friendly engine featuring '3D parallax scrolling' and 'infinite zoom'. Turn-based option for beard-stroking types. Special 'spy cams' for spying
Cons: The original didn't quite set the world on fire. That name's a bit of a stinker, isn't it?
Missions: No figures just yet, but probably lots, right?
Units: Loads – over 100, in fact
Multiple players: Up to six at once
Will the AI be any good?: Hopefully – also, each species has its own characteristics, which should affect their behaviour accordingly
Release date: April '98

itself will be more interactive: you'll be able to blast bridges and actually change the terrain (one example cited by Yeo is a river which slowly freezes over, enabling vehicles to cross). There are tons of new units in the pipeline, such as robotic walking 'tanks', jetpacking troops, and even a subterranean unit which drills into the ground and pops out where the enemy least expects it.

While we're on the subject of units, one especially neat proposition is the way in which your troops will gain 'experience' as they fight, rather like characters in an RPG. The more battle-scarred your unit, the more abilities, armour, and in some cases intelligence it will have. Doubtless spurred on by Cavedog's *Web* success, Westwood are also promising heavy online support and are clearly hoping to kickstart a healthy *Tiberian Sun* culture, similar to that enjoyed by *Quake*, with players encouraged to form clans and enter leagues. Presumably anyone who splashed out on *Sole Survivor* will be given extra special treatment and all will be forgiven.

These are all excellent ideas. But so far, most of the attention has been directed at the fact that the sequel will

feature fancy coloured lighting at the expense of the more pertinent details. Perhaps Westwood are simply keeping their cards close to their chest – and given the number of pretenders to their throne, who can blame them? However, it would appear that this time they're going to have a *real* war on their hands. Clearly, *Tiberian Sun* has the potential to be another landmark title. As Westwood release more information the picture will inevitably become clearer. Until then, all we can do is hope. 7



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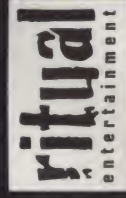
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MECHCOMMANDER

Mech heads are finally getting what they've been waiting for – a real-time strategy game set within the BattleTech universe. Jeremy Wells spoke to the game's creators, FASA, about their plans for world domination.

T

AKING A SUCCESSFUL TABLE-TOP GAME to the PC screen isn't as easy as you might think. Sure, you've got a rich universe and characters to draw on, but start to mess with the structure too much and things can very quickly get messy. Only now can the *Warhammer* fans who got their fingers burned with *Shadow Of The Horned Rat* seek solace with the 3D über-sequel that is *Dark Omen*. With this in mind, it perhaps comes as no surprise that when news broke of a real-time strategy game set within the *BattleTech* universe, the reaction from many fans of the original table-top series was one of trepidation and muted excitement. If it was so difficult to get the *Warhammer* series onto the small screen, would the same mistakes be made with their beloved futuristic fantasy world?

Chicago-based FASA (the people behind the *BattleTech* games) are obviously keen not to fall into a similar trap, and are desperate to get it right first time. "Activision did a great job with *MechWarrior* and *MechWarrior 2*," explains Denny Thorley, head honcho at FASA and producer of *MechCommander*. "And as a result, expectations for any game set within the *BattleTech* universe are understandably high. The idea was born many years ago. Both Jordan Weisman [creator of the *BattleTech* universe] and I believed there was an opportunity to develop a computer game that would deliver the true experience of command. While many real-time strategy games explore this theme, few include real-world consequences. We really wanted players to feel a sense of responsibility and genuine emotional connection with the individuals under their command. When players lose a member of their team, we want them to feel it in the pit of their stomach, just like real life."

Of course, sentiment and immersion are important, but all people really want to know is: Why will it be better than *C&C*? From the expression on Denny's face, it's pretty obvious that it's a question he's answered many times before. Co-producer Frank Savage, a lifelong *BattleTech* fan and ex-Origin programmer who worked on *Wing Commander III*, chips in: "We're not out to create just another *C&C* clone and use the *BattleTech* licence to sell it. We saw an opportunity to provide computer gamers with a new means of interacting with the *BattleTech* universe, not from the perspective of a *MechWarrior*, but from that of a commander.



The engine may look a little dated, but coloured lighting and smoke effects are in evidence.

We knew expectations would be very high for our game. On the one hand there are literally millions of *BattleTech* enthusiasts who have been playing the pen-and-paper *BattleTech* games for over 14 years, and we want them to play *MechCommander*. These people are intimately familiar with the *BattleTech* universe, its BattleMechs and storyline. On the other hand, we want the game to appeal to real-time strategy fans who aren't that familiar with the *BattleTech* world, but might enjoy playing a game set within what is a very rich and diverse universe. Consequently we wanted to break out of the traditional confines typically associated with real-time strategy games; we wanted to develop a game that didn't burden players with building and accumulating resources. Instead we decided to focus on other, more dynamic aspects of command that are more enjoyable, as well as working on a rich storyline and

Eighteen different Mechs, all customisable. And here's where it all happens.



Setting the scene

You are a commander of Zulu Company, of the first Davion Guards, facing the technologically superior Smoke Jaguar Clan. You have been dropped into Port Arthur ahead of the main invasion force. Your mission is to secure the Landing Zone before the main invasion force arrives. You must sweep the area and engage any enemy Mechs you encounter. Good luck!



FASA have attempted to make the terrain as interactive as possible. You'll be able to trample and set fire to trees, for example.



developing what we like to call a persistent strategy that forces the player to look after his pilots and Mechs. We've also split the game into two stages: logistics and battle. Before embarking on a mission, players will have to choose the right Mechs for the job, choose the right pilots, weapons and sensors. Once they're confident with their selection they can get in there and start to kick some ass. If you just dive in without giving a thought to your selection and with no strategy you'll just get toasted. Each mission, and there are 30 of 'em, can be completed in a number of different ways, so players will have to manage their resources very carefully if they are to progress very far into the campaign. The thing is, you just don't know what's out there. Do you send out a scout Mech to see what's there? Do you launch artillery support to soften 'em up, or do you risk a frontal assault and try and use some of your jet Mechs to jump the wall at the back of the base? Overall there's a lot more strategy and planning involved than with C&C. And if you mess up and lose valuable pilots and units, then you're in for a real fight."

An hour spent with some early – but pretty stable – code shows that *MechCommander* plays very differently from your average C&C clone. Those people unfamiliar with the *BattleTech* universe may find it a little confusing at first, and the FMV-laden intro sequence may serve to distance you rather than encourage the level of immersion. But a few minutes experimenting with the drag-and-drop menu and some tips from Frank and we're ready for battle.

At first glance the engine might look a little dated when compared to the likes of *Total Annihilation* or even *Dark Reign* – a sign that the game's been in development for three years or so, perhaps? Further investigation and interrogation reveals that although a two-stage zoom facility, coloured lighting and smoke effects are in evidence, the lack of new innovations such as line of sight and a *Myth*-like 3D rotational engine have been ignored. "We'd just have to make too many compromises with the gameplay and look of the game if we included everything," argues Frank. "Put too much stuff in and it becomes very difficult to balance, and the whole thing just grinds to a halt. At the moment we're very happy with the way the Mechs look and move – each one is animated in 100,000 frames – and there are 18 of them. As for line of sight, if you're on top of a mountain you'll be able to see more of the map, and different terrain will affect the movement of your Mech. You can burn down forests, for example, and trample on trees."

MechCommander undoubtedly contains some interesting elements that will challenge your perceptions of what you really want in a C&C-style game. Whether FASA will be able to create a game that will appeal to both *BattleTech* and real-time strategy fans alike is open to question. From what we've seen so far however, this could be the start of a beautiful relationship. 7

Product details

Developer: FASA Interactive

Publisher: MicroProse

Website: www.fasa.com

Release date: June



"Dive in without a strategy and you'll just get toasted!"

Cool stuff

PART ONE:

One of the more innovative features to be found in *MechCommander* is the ability to instruct your pilots to aim at and shoot out certain parts of an enemy Mech. The more combat experience your pilot has, the better shot he'll be, so it's worth sticking your most experienced veteran out of enemy range and instructing him to take pot shots at advanced enemy Mechs. A direct hit effectively disables a Mech, so you can send in the grunts to salvage the wreck. Once you've got it back to your base you have access to all the onboard (and hopefully undamaged) weapons and technology. Cool.

cursor at the target, click your mouse, and a few seconds later... it's carnage time, folks. Wahay!



PART TWO:

As well as three different ranged attacks you can also call in air strikes. How many are available to you is limited to your mission and how far you've progressed through the campaign. Simply point your

PART THREE:

You'll also be able to tweak the artificial intelligence in the game using the scenario editor. If you can find your way around FASA's 'Advanced Brain Language' you can customise the artificial intelligence to your own specifications. Chillin'.



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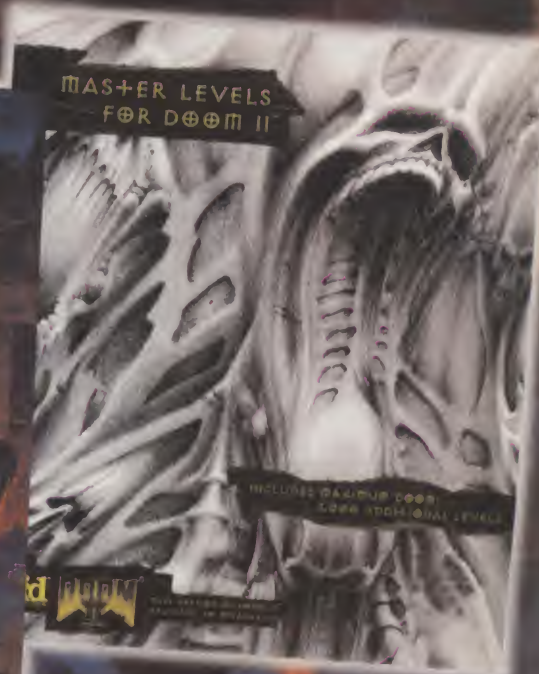


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THE DEPTHS OF

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TRILOGY



THREE CD-ROM COLLECTOR'S SET

KLINGON: HONOR GUARD

Is an expensive movie license enough to make another *Quake* clone stand out from the rest? **Jeremy Wells** went to see why MicroProse are pulling out all the stops to ensure that their latest *Star Trek* game won't get lost in the crowd.

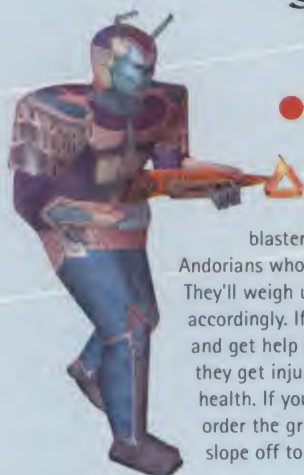
W

ITH SO MANY *QUAKE*-STYLE GAMES DUE for release this year and so many using the same 3D engines, it's becoming increasingly obvious that to get noticed you've got to come up with something different. MicroProse

plan to release two *Star Trek* games this year, both set within the *Next Generation* universe and both using the *Unreal* engine. *First Contact* will be similar in style to *Generations* in that it will loosely follow the plot of last year's movie and, true to the *Star Trek* ethos, the emphasis will not be on combat, but on exploration and puzzle solving. *Klingon: Honor Guard*, on the other hand, will be much more of a blast fest; although according to producer Jay Luss it will not be just another *Quake* clone in *Next Gen* clothing: "There will be a heavy strategy element in *Klingon* – it'll be more like *GoldenEye* on the Nintendo 64. You'll have to be careful about what you do; you'll have to have a strategy and use cover – not just go in guns blazing, or you'll just end up dead."

As well as taking full advantage of *Unreal*'s impressive coloured lighting effects and getting to grips with the level designing tools, Luss and his team have been spending a lot of time developing character artificial intelligence routines: "At the moment we're working on different AI traits for different creatures," he enthuses.

"This is the first *Star Trek* action game and we're gonna make sure it kicks ass." – Jay Luss, producer



"You've got your average grunt who'll just come after you and probably end up as blaster fodder, but you've also got Andorians who are a bit more intelligent. They'll weigh up a situation and act accordingly. If things look bad they'll go and get help and then come after you. If they get injured they'll go looking for health. If you stumble into a room they'll order the grunts to attack you, and maybe slope off to get reinforcements. The idea is



that you'll really have to think about how you tackle these guys and be a little bit more careful about what you do or you're gonna pay the price."

Although *Klingon* uses the *Unreal* engine, it's definitely got a certain look about it. Like *Generations*, there will be loads of different environments to explore stretching over 20 levels that include ice caverns, space stations, a Klingon city, a space station and a detention centre. Was *Unreal*'s superior level designing capability a factor in which 3D engine they decided to go with? "We went with *Unreal* over *Quake II* for a number of reasons. Basically *Unreal* is more feature-rich and it's got a good look to it – much better than *Quake II*. It's

Question time. Which Klingon weapon is this? Answers on a postcard to 'I'm a sad and lonely man' competition.



By utilising the *Unreal* engine, the developers are concentrating on level design to encourage tactical play rather than an out and out blastfest.

also got a good learning curve and the *Unreal* script is very good. We've been getting new builds all the time and we're very impressed with what can be achieved. Because we've got seven unique environments, each with their own particular look, we've had to include loads of different textures and effects, and the *Unreal* engine handles this really well. The *Quake* engine is undoubtedly quick and works well with confined levels, but there is a trade-off. Some of our levels are absolutely huge, and many are set outside. The *Unreal* engine may be a little slower, but it's more versatile and the overall performance is better. For example, we've got coloured lighting in software as well as hardware, and we've got inertia – when you're exploring the ice level you'll slip and slide all over the place. *Unreal* also allows us to go to town with the character design. We've got loads of frames of animation in there, and when you get up close you'll actually be able to see what kind of weapon a character is holding."

Pace and patience

A look at the screenshots on this spread should be enough to convince anyone that *Klingon* looks the business. The water and lighting effects are quite stunning, and the attention to detail is almost overwhelming. Ambient light flickers over creatures as they move about a room, and distant Klingon chatter can be heard echoing down corridors. The fact that the levels look quite different also gives you an immense sense of scale, and the feeling that you're walking around a world that's inhabited by living, breathing characters.

Klingon quite clearly isn't just another *Quake* clone. But what will make it stand out from *SiN*, *HalfLife*, *Duke Forever* and *Daikatana*?

"We've obviously got a rich sci-fi world to draw inspiration from," argues Luss. "This is the first *Star Trek* action game and we're gonna make sure it kicks ass. The character AI is beyond anything else we've seen, and the way we're designing the game means that you'll have to really think about how you're gonna get through to the next level. Our characters will back off and shoot and run for cover, and if they think they've got the upper hand they'll come after you. Each level will contain certain *Star Trek*-style challenges and you'll have to achieve certain objectives to progress. We're really concentrating on the pacing of the game to give the player a new experience. Some levels you'll just have to go in guns blazing, others you'll have to use stealth – shoot out lights, hide, watch and wait. Some levels will have alarms, so you'll have to be extra careful to avoid getting noticed. It will be very different from *Quake*, believe me."

There are also plans for some pretty cool weapons and 'devices' that have been borrowed from other games and tweaked. "You've got your disrupter pistol and rifle, a flame thrower, a rocket launcher, a grenade launcher, a laser shotgun with two beams that split into six, a plasma weapon which is very similar to the BFG, and then there's your



dagger. As well as using it for hand-to-hand combat you can throw it, and if you manage a direct hit you'll get an instant kill. We figured that as it's so hard to use we'd better reward you for trying! Also, you've gotta remember to pick it up or you'll just lose it forever," enthuses Luss.

"At the moment we're working on an anti-gravity belt, magnetic boots – as seen in the *First Contact* movie – which will allow you to walk up walls, and we've got three different types of camera that you'll be able to leave in rooms to spy on other players. There's a static camera, one you can move and one that moves and shoots, which will be great for ambushes in multi-player games. We've got loads of ideas to incorporate yet. It's gonna be great."

From what we've been privy to so far, it looks as though *Klingon: Honor Guard* will be more than a match for the numerous other *Quake* killers that are about to hit the shelves over the next few months. If the frame rate remains high once the levels are completed, the AI lives up to expectations and the rich *Star Trek* tapestry is fully absorbed throughout, it looks like we'll finally get a game that can compete with Nintendo's *GoldenEye*. Let's just hope they can pull it off. **Z**



"Come and get some!" Character detailing is impressively high, with above average frames of animation for fluid movement.

Product details

Developer: MicroProse US

Publisher: MicroProse

Website: www.microprose.com

Release date: September '98



(Above) Andorians, Klingons... Do we get to kill those disgusting humans? (Below) Producer Jay Luss can't wait to get his hands on the latest *Unreal* build.





SPEC OPS: RANGER ASSAULT

With all the games that come and go through the office it's not often that a demo comes along and brings everything to a standstill. *Spec Ops* did exactly that. We all played it, then told Richie Shoemaker to do the donkey work.

7

JUST THINK BACK TO ANY 3D SHOOT 'EM up you've played – *Doom*, *Quake*, *Jedi*, whatever. Now think what it's like when you enter a room full of bad guys. You edge yourself round the corner and see them facing the wall away from you. You methodically switch to handy grenade launcher, place the cross-hair in the middle of them and let loose with a couple of frags. A second later and all of them have come apart like a chocolate orange in a health farm. Nice.

So what happens next? Do the hordes of cacodemons that were milling about the adjoining corridor come flooding in after being knocked senseless by the aftershock? Do they come to the aid of their screaming, bleeding-stumped comrades? No. They wait for you to come and blow 'em like a fat punter.

What's different about *Spec Ops* is that if you've been firing off shots in the same place for too long the enemy soon tracks you down. You have to keep moving. There's no waiting around to watch your foe's head come apart, you've got things to do apart from getting to the next level: there are hostages to save, planes to blow up and drug barons to assassinate.

Played in the third-person perspective, *Spec Ops* promises to be the first in what should turn out to be a long line in tactical action games. This first one is based around the US Army Rangers who, like any covert unit, claim to be the toughest in the world. What makes the game special though? We spoke to Matt Gorman, a producer at the game's publishers, BMG, who was understandably keen to extol *Spec Ops*' virtues.

PC Zone: Firstly, what is *Spec Ops* all about?

Matt Gorman: *Spec Ops: Ranger Assault* captures the realism of combat scenarios which are based on mission campaigns of the US Army Ranger ground infantry units. There are five unique



environments from all over the globe, each offering the player at least three separate mission objectives. The missions offer the player a sense of linearity, and the environments are all very large so there is lots of exploration that can be done if you want to take the risk. *Zombie's* goal here is action, realism and hints of strategy. The player should feel completely immersed in a realistic combat sim.

PCZ: How did you go about achieving the realism?

MG: The co-founders of the company, Mark Long and Joanna Alexander, come from military research backgrounds, so the *Spec Ops* titles are something they always wanted to pursue. In fact, Mark is an ex-Army Ranger, so this project was carefully overseen during the entire time of its development. It's a good balance to have those with military experience at hand, who are concerned more about the realism aspect of the game, and the rest of the team who are concerned with making it a fun experience for the player.

Tremendous amounts of research went into the design of the game, which was carried out with the help of US Army Rangers at nearby Fort Lewis. They especially like the fact that we are concentrating on realism. The Special Operations units don't like to be made out to be commando types like they are often



(Top) Choppers, bridges and bloody big guns. (Middle) People who know when enough is enough. (Above) Lots and lots of luscious greenery (of course, the night vision goggles help).

The rain-soaked jungles of Colombia had everyone in the office feeling more than a little bit moist.

portrayed in films. The units have really helped out over the course of development, from inviting the Zombie team to watch their 'live fire' exercises, to capturing the gunfire sounds in the field with them, to lending a Ranger for the weekend to do the motion capture, to taking very specific photos of their vehicles, to sending a Ranger unit to a photo studio downtown so their faces could be photographed for the game. The level designs were discussed with several officers who helped guide development in the right direction if it was ever too far off. *Spec Ops: Ranger Assault* owes a lot to the military for being so helpful over the course of its production.

PCZ: So what makes the game different from, say, the *Special Forces* version of *Quake*?

MG: Each environment has a set of mission objectives depending on the scenario. We have raid and destroy missions, reprisal attacks, hostage rescue, counter-terrorist attacks, and seek and destroy missions. The campaigns are set in Russia, North Korea, Colombia, Mexico, and Afghanistan. The different geography types include forest, snow-covered, jungle, desert and semi-urban. Each environment is also very different in its terrain features, and the surface feel for each of these will be very different. For example, the physics for the snow will obviously be different than for the jungle, in that the player will slide down steep slopes in the snow. Sound also plays a large part in the overall atmosphere of the environments. The sounds for the footsteps are directly linked to the type of terrain the player is currently treading on. Other cool physical properties include collision detection with static and dynamic objects, and ballistics calculations at the time of gunfire. Since most

the game, then the enemy will be aware of infiltration right away. On the other hand, if the player decides to be a little more stealthy, he will be able to get through the environment with minimum casualties.

PCZ: There's talk of new *Spec Ops* games featuring new forces like our own SAS. Can we eventually expect new environment, heavy weapons and use of vehicles?

MG: SAS, US Navy Seals and so on; loads of hi-tech gadgetry; heavy weapons and explosives; laser guidance systems, stealth gliders, scuba scenarios, helicopters, Harriers, humvees, tanks... These are all in the plans. And that's all that will be said for now.

PCZ: Cheers. Bye.

So now you know all about it, you've played the demo (haven't you?) and you're patiently waiting for the full version. So what happens next? Well, the game's publishers, BMG, have recently been taken over

Product details

Developer: Zombie Interactive

Publisher: BMG Interactive

Website: www.zombie.com

Release Date: May

"Realistic combat scenarios are based on missions of the US Army Rangers units." – Matt Gorman (BMG)

weapons can fire projectiles at a fast enough speed to assure instantaneous collisions, a ray is traced along the path of gunfire in order to determine which objects it intersects. Weapon recoil and visual effects on destroyed objects are also a part of the physics routines.

PCZ: More than your average action game, then?

MG: Sure. You can either choose to go in Rambo-style and shoot everything in sight, or you can use a more strategic method to complete the mission objectives within the time limit. The enemy AI is attached to an overall defcon level, so if you go into a mission with guns blazing, blowing up everything you see, the enemy will be immediately alerted and ready for you. If you choose a more sneaky approach, then you will be able to avoid some of the enemy as well as sneak up on them.

PCZ: How does that work?

MG: The enemy will react and respond depending on the defcon level as described earlier. The enemy will be in certain positions either ready for the player or not, depending on the defcon level. If the player is heard early on, then the enemy will be more aware and sometimes be hiding from the player on rooftops or behind buildings. Enemy awareness will also depend on visual recognition of the player as well as the sound of an explosion within a certain distance. The enemy can also contact their buddies in another area of the game so that they are ready for you as well. Once you start blowing things up and shooting everything in sight, all hell breaks loose. For instance, if the player decides to blow up a vehicle as soon as he enters

by Take 2 Interactive, so consequently there's a bit of a fat spanner in the works. Release is going ahead in the US (but without any multi-player options), while over here we might have to wait a bit longer until new patches are included – which is a good thing. As we all know, if something's worth doing it's worth doing right. Right? Right. **Z**

The aiming of weapons is automatic and dependent upon true line of sight.



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DOMINION: STORM OVER GIFT 3

With *Daikatana* currently “delayed”, it seems that Ion Storm’s first release will be *Dominion*, a – woo! – real-time sci-fi strategy game. It may be a bit similar to *C*mm*nd & C*nq**r* but a clone it’s not. Honestly, says **David McCandless**.



Dominion sports more than 60 missions over varying terrains. Each of the races can have ten different vehicles and up to four varieties of troops.

DOMINION IS THE FIRST game from John Romero’s upstart megabucks development penthouse Ion Storm. Surprisingly, it’s not a 3D shooter. Nor does it sport giblets, cartilage, or huge geysers of bubbling body parts sprayed from floor to ceiling. It’s a real-time strategy thing not a gadzillion miles away from *C&C*, *WarCraft*, *Age Of Empires* or any other of the 20 or so ore-war-and-tanks games in the genre.

Dominion is being produced by a guy called Todd Porter, one of the heavyweight game designers who live under the Ion Storm umbrella. He was working on the game at Texas-based 7th Level before he joined Romero’s side. In between slaving on his chief title, *Doppelganger*, Porter found time to snaffle up *Dominion* and its team and bring it to Ion to get it finished.



“It didn’t look too good when we got it,” he says. “The install program crashed my machine.” But in the five months since they nabbed it, Ion Stormers have been hard at work cannibalising the code, redesigning the interface, redoing the graphics, jiggling this, honing that, tweaking the other. And the result of all that is a fairly voluptuous, very accessible,

“*Dominion* is a simple genre game with some neat visuals and clever enhancements.”



(Left) The forces of the Darken: quick, deadly and brown. Quick tip: do not mess with these muthas unless you are a bit ‘tasty’.

well-implemented slice of entertainment.

The plot is the usual kind of *Dune*-esque sci-fi nonsense. The planet Gift3 is said to be the resting place of a powerful ancient artefact – the Gift3 Messiah. It has tremendous power, and anyone who owns it can snuff out planets with just a sneeze. Naturally, at the news of the technological terror, three other races plus the master race (Man) zipped quickly over to the Gift system to claim the object. And like a bunch of drunken sailors bumping into a group of pissed-up firemen who had just nearly fallen over a team of rowdy ranchers chasing a band of lagered-up postmen, a huge and lengthy battle ensued. The aim: control of the planet and thus the artefact.

You can choose to play as any of the four races in this titanic struggle, be it Human, Darken, Mercs or Scorps. Each



Very hi-res indeed. With a 1280x1024 screen size, it's no freaking surprise that *Dominion's* minimum spec is a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM.

has its own distinctive look, feel, taste, smell, strengths and weaknesses. The Mercs, for example, are big on firepower and have a tendency to play their technological joker – the Widowmaker, a vehicle which can remote-control opponents' tanks and pilot them against their own forces. But they may have a problem if they attempt the tactic on the Darken, an ancient species renowned for their heavy fortifications. The Scorps are no push-over either, being rather ruthless, predatory and hive-mental. Then, at the bottom of the food chain, there are the Humans, relying on their guile, average technology and big, shouty commanders.

The ability to pick and choose your race and grapple with the different weaponry of each is one of the big sells for *Dominion*. It builds an element of surprise and fear into your battles – you never know quite what's going to come marching at you from the edges of the map. The other big gimmick is the fast, get-in-there interface and the pleasantly effortless ease of use.

It's got the look

From low-powered C&C munchkins to those scary chrome-domed Professors Of Strategy you bump into on the Internet, *Dominion* is easy to play. There's not much complex resource management, you simply park a refinery over one of the planet's energy wells and your cash starts pouring in; as you build more and more tanks, towers and troops, your factories and installations can be upgraded; bridges can be created to span gorges; and faraway energy wells can be colonised and then linked to your main base via power umbilicals.

Graphically, the game looks detailed and pretty. The various settings – Arctic wastelands, grassy tundra, deserts and generic temperate zones – are nicely drawn in the C&C isometric mould. Each tiny soldier or huge, walking robot has a quillion frames of animations, making each hugely pyrotechnic battle scenes fizz around your monitor.

Technologically, the game has some substantially improved code over its companions in the genre. Screen resolution goes up 1280x1024 for poshos with 19-inch monitors to play their proletariat 14-inchers at 640x480 (although that's not much of an advantage considering that it also promises a 30 frames per second smoothness at all sizes). The AI is also being touted as special.

"We can track over 2000 units on any map," says Porter. "All of them moving. And then your enemies will work with their limitations. If they don't have the firepower to take out your base, they'll destroy your power lines or find another weak spot."

The game CD comes packed with luscious-looking cut-scenes – 90 minutes of the damn things, showcasing Ion Storm's substantial art talent. John Romero has been



The various settings – Arctic wastelands, grassy tundra, deserts and generic temperate zones are nicely drawn.

producing the music (expect heavy, expect guitars). The plural-player networking option supports eight-player deathmatch or – for the hand-holding, doubles badminton players among us – the much maligned 'co-operative' mode. Both IPX and Internet TCP/IP are supported, as are direct modem and cable connections. It's not a world-breaking concept. It doesn't use world-breaking technology or some wazzy new experimental interface. *Dominion* is a simple genre game with some neat visuals and clever enhancements. And if you like this kind of game then that's exactly what you want to hear. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. ☺



Product details

Developer: Ion Storm

Publisher: Eidos Interactive

Website: www.dominion-ion-storm.com

Release Date: April '98



(Above right) Ah, one of the game's nasty Zulu-esque battles. Several thousand Darkens attempt to deluge a small but feisty stronghold of humans. Spoiler: the humans die.

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The Lionhead Diaries: Part 4

Fun and games...

In this business, I guess certain things are unavoidable.



Mark Healey with his 'BLAH' on the landscape. If you look closely you can see two test screens for the game we're working on, *Black And White*, on the other machine.



over to Amsterdam for long weekends (I can't imagine why). He's a part-time rock guitarist/drummer, and his timekeeping in the office is hopeless. But he's a brilliant computer artist: 95 per cent of the *Dungeon Keeper* graphics came from his mighty mouse. Looking over his shoulder I see a hilly landscape in various shades of turquoise. He clicks a button and the word 'BLAH' appears from behind the hill in red and rises into the sky. Another click and it starts snowing. What is he on? He says he's learning to use 3D Studio Max. As it cost over £2500, I presume what he's doing is really clever...

Mark is into anything alternative. What might be 'hippy bullshit' to the rest of us is, to him, an alternative view of reality. "Anyway," he'll insist, "who's to say your reality is right? It's just one of an infinite number of possible realities..."

Recently he showed us a curious little stunt. He got me to hold an apple in one hand while pressing upwards with my other arm against Mark's outstretched forearm. After 30 seconds or so, he replaced the apple with a cigarette. When I tried to press his forearm again, the strength had gone out of my arm. A simple case of muscle exhaustion? Mark was

LAST YEAR WE ASKED

various people to produce our company logo of a lion's head. In the end we all agreed that the best design was by Evie

McLaughlin, who had also created the Bullfrog

logo. Delighted that we had chosen her work, Evie put it onto floppies which circulated round the office as we all began creating Lionhead stationary and screen savers. Little did we know that the disks were plague carriers...

Everyone froze as a *Star Trek* 'red alert' klaxon bellowed from Mark Webley's speakers. "Shit! It's a virus!" "Which one?" Having never caught one before, I was terrified. Would eight weeks' work disappear as it zipped around the network erasing our hard drives? We crowded round Mark's machine. Luckily he'd installed ThunderBYTE Anti Virus, which caught and killed it. We lost an afternoon inoculating our machines, but thankfully no harm seemed to have been done.

Two new people had arrived this month. Both were members of the *Dungeon Keeper* team. Jonty Barnes is an energetic eager beaver in charge of our game's AI routines. He's also a Spurs fan, and pissed us off by winning the first week's Fantasy Football competition (earning him a cool £14).

He's also developed a reputation as the Lionhead stud, and tells us about the line of young ladies queuing up to stay at his flat. Although we tease him, we're green with envy. I was working out our Fantasy Football results one morning, when Jonty breezed in at looking pleased with himself.

"Good weekend?" I asked.

"Yep," Jonty grinned. "Got laid."

"Very interesting," I nodded. "But I meant was it a good weekend for your Fantasy Football team? Gallacher scored a hat trick for me on Saturday."

"Oh," replied Jonty sheepishly. "Er, dunno. I wasn't paying much attention to football this weekend..."

Jonty's ex-girlfriend has a gorgeous friend who is a nurse. He's longing for some treatment from her – but not of the medical kind. However, he's only met her once and has no idea how to contact her except through his ex-girlfriend – and she's moving to Edinburgh in a week's time. But he's still in with a chance, as he's been invited round to his ex's flat next Wednesday. The nurse will be there – but it's our footie night, and if he misses it he'll lose his place in the team.

"So Jonty," Mark W teases him. "What's it to be?..."

One of Jonty's first tasks at Lionhead was to develop a 'wall-hugging routine' which calculates the shortest distance from A to B through a maze of walls. When he finished he challenged Peter to a bet: if Peter could make the program crash, Jonty would buy him a copy of *Final Fantasy VII*. But if it stood the test, Peter had to pay for Jonty's copy. Peter lost.

The other newcomer is Mark Healey, our resident radical: two-tone hair, sneakers and T-shirts, nose rings, the lot... And he always looks like he's just got out of bed. He often nips

"Everyone froze as a Star Trek 'red alert' klaxon bellowed from Mark's speakers. 'Shit! It's a virus!'"



(From top) Mark Webley is totally horrified to find a virus on his machine. Peter tries to help; Jonty, a big fan of Liz Hurley; Peter tests Jonty's wall-hugging routine – at stake is a copy of *Final Fantasy VII*.

convinced it was down to something else entirely.

"Your body, like, recognises the cigarette as poison. That makes it go weak."

Coffee spurted from Tim's mouth all over his keyboard. The entire office turned towards Mark and shouted "Bollocks!" in unison.

"It's true," Mark insisted. "I pity you bastards. You don't know anything. You've been brainwashed. You can't, like, open your mind to anything new..."

And so the conversation around the office flits from subject to subject:

Mark W: "Hey, Demis. Why did you call your Fantasy Football team Super Scum?"

Demis: "It's a bloody good team. They're all super stars."

Tim: "Then why are you doing so badly?"

Demis: "Because they're all scumbags. They're super. But they're scum. They're Super Scum..."

Peter: "Has anyone else noticed that Monty's got the most disgusting bum you've ever seen?" (Monty is Peter's house-keeper's poodle; he suffered a prolapsed anus last year.)

Jonty: "Can we please talk about the semi-colon situation?"

This codiferous (an adjective we made up which relates to computer code) comment cut me out of the conversation. The others babbled unintelligibly for a while about when and where to use brackets, classes which are publicly derived and who was the last person to check in.

Time for me to get on with some real work... 17

Co-founder of Games Workshop, author of *Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks*, game designer and columnist for the *Daily Telegraph*, Steve Jackson is now a director of start-up Lionhead.

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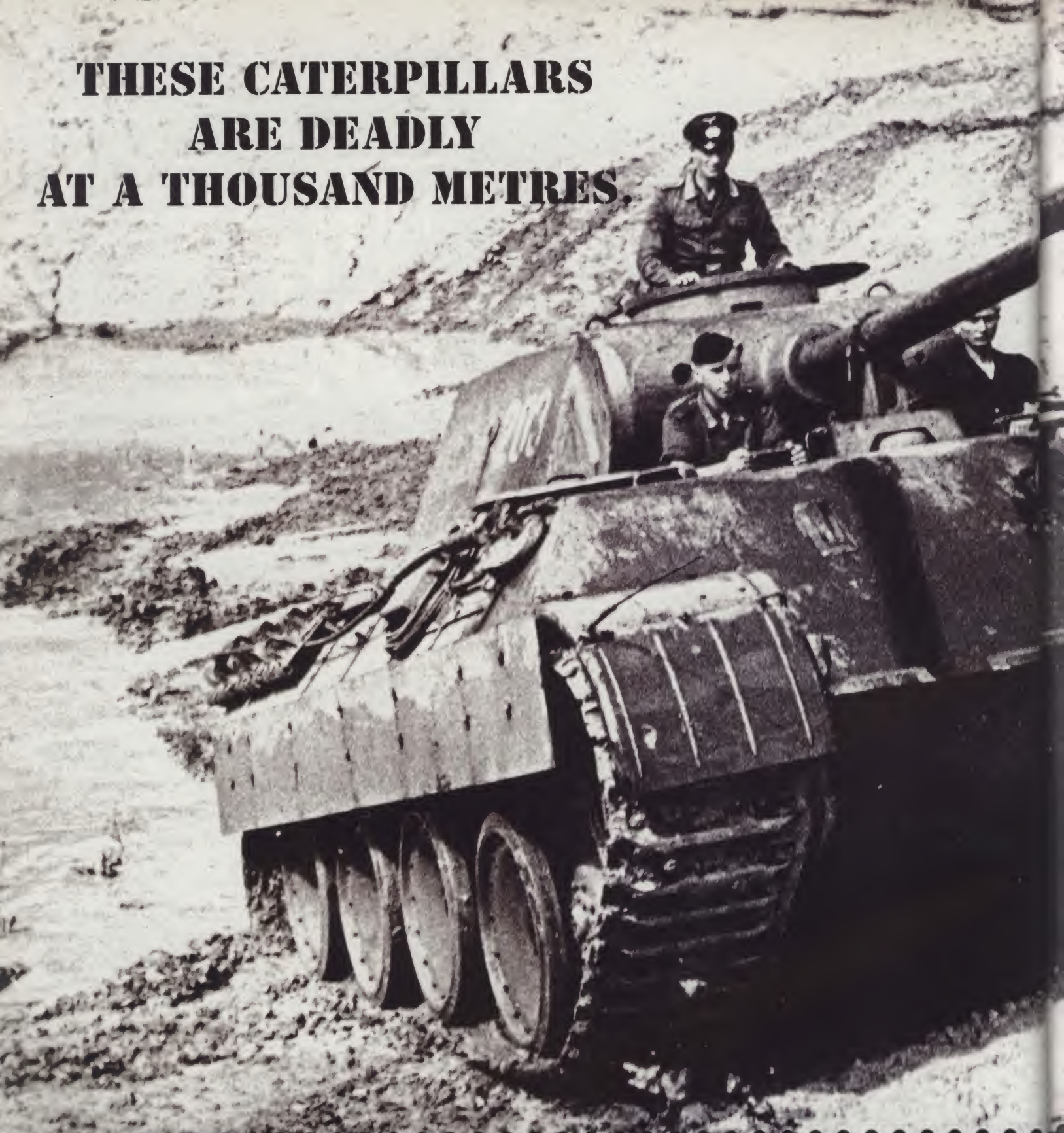


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Review ZONE

This month

There are some great-looking games out there at the moment, but why does everyone seem to be so mad keen on coloured lighting all of a sudden?

asks Jeremy Wells.



7 THIS MONTH MOST OF THE OFFICE HAVE been dividing their time between regular bouts of the awesome *Incoming* and networked *Forsaken* – two of the best-looking PC games we have ever seen.

Thanks to the 3D card 'revolution', we're seeing some fantastic-looking games that must be making our console chums weep with jealousy. If you've got a 3D accelerator card in your machine and have played the exclusive demos we gave you with last month's issue, you'll know exactly what all the fuss is about. We tried both games with a new Creative Labs Voodoo 2 card, and to be honest we were rather underwhelmed (see this month's TechZone on page 127 for a full report). Sure, the frame rate was blistering, but we couldn't really detect any visual improvements. If you believe the hype, both *Incoming* and *Forsaken* are supposedly even better when played on a PC with a next-generation card. But, to be honest, if you've already got a standard 3Dfx card in your machine, we recommend that you wait until the price comes tumbling down (which it invariably will) before you even think about splashing out on a new card.

And while we're on the subject of 3D cards, what's this obsession with coloured lighting effects? *Quake II* was full of it, *Forsaken* looks in parts like a Top Of The Pops set, *Incoming* is brimming with coloured explosions and flashes, and now even Westwood are getting in on the act with *Tiberian Sun*. I think we can all agree that coloured lighting looks good when used in moderation, but too much of it is most definitely overkill.

Once again, there are some very high-scoring games in this issue, but please note that there are also many different genres represented – action (*Incoming/Forsaken*), driving (*Motorhead*), strategy (*M1 Tank Platoon 2*) and adventure (*Starship Titanic*). There are also some pretty dire games out there – *Red Baron 2* and *Queen: The Eye*, for example, which are best avoided unless you're a flight sim fanatic with money to spare or a very sad Queen fan. You've been warned. **Z**

Incoming (top) and *Forsaken* – two of the best-looking games ever to grace the PC. Just look at those coloured lighting effects. Oooh!



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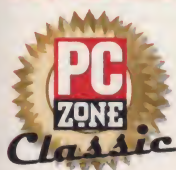
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Scoring system

90+ CLASSIC



The highest accolade a game can attain. Not only is it innovative and highly original, but it's extremely playable and has masses of long-term appeal. Games that receive the 'Classic' award should be seen as a benchmark with which to compare other games of the same genre.

80-89 RECOMMENDED



An excellent game that simply lacks that certain something to make it a gaming classic. It may not be necessarily highly original, but it contains some new ideas and variations that add to the genre that are well implemented. Well worth checking out.

70-79

If a game scores within this bracket it's good, but not good enough to be recommended. It's not exactly original and somebody's probably done it better already, but it's still playable all the same. Basically, it's worth shelling out for, especially if you're a big fan of the genre, but don't expect anything innovative. Whatever you do, don't discount games just because they don't quite hit the recommended mark!

50-69

Games that fall into this bracket are distinctly average and don't really offer anything new. There's nothing much wrong with these titles, but then there's nothing much to recommend them either. They're just average. Okay. Not bad. Alright. We've seen it all before. A lot better on budget. You get the picture.

40-49

Okay, so you're not really going to buy this, are you? We'd advise you not to. It's below average, it's not very playable, you'll probably be disappointed. It had a few nice ideas, but they were badly executed. Give it a miss.

21-39

Oh dear. This should never have got past the ideas stage. It offers absolutely nothing new to the genre, is very limited in terms of gameplay, frustrating to play and ultimately a complete waste of money. Avoid disappointment. Avoid this game.

20 AND BELOW PANTS



Absolutely bloody awful. Unplayable, due to bad design or bugged code. Crap with a capital 'C'. Naff with a capital 'N'. Do not buy this game, it will ruin your life and all those who come into contact with it. It doesn't get much worse than this. Have we made ourselves clear?

In Perspective

This is designed as a purely visual guide to how games of a similar style compare. The bars do not relate to previous review scores... they are simply an indication of how the reviewer feels about the products on a sliding scale.

Game 1



Game 2



THE BENCHMARK PC

At PC Zone all games are played and tested on a **DAN Technology Pentium 133** with 16Mb RAM, a 2Mb graphics card and a quad-speed CD-ROM drive. We also use Maxi Gamer 3Dfx cards for releases that support D3D and 3Dfx specific games.



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GT INTERACTIVE	01923 209145
MICROSOFT	0870 565000
EMPIRE	0181 343 9143

THANKS THIS ISSUE TO:

James Bevan @VIE
Jason Dutton @ MicroProse
Andrea Griffiths @ Fox
Ben @ Activision
Wag (gone but not forgotten)



ATI 3D
Native Version Available



3DBLASTER
Native Version Available



3DFX
Native Version Available



DIAMOND STEALTH
Native Version Available



MATROX MYSTIQUE
Native Version Available



POWERVR
Native Version Available



The software is designed to take advantage of **D3D**



The software is designed to take advantage of **MMX**



This software will only run under **WINDOWS 95**



The software may run slowly, especially in hi-res mode



The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTINPUT**



The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTPLAY**



The software supports **INTERNET PLAY**



The software will run acceptably on a **486DX2/66**

Cool games

We see hundreds of games over the months but there are a few that we hang on to and continue to play at lunch-time/when we're supposed to be doing more important stuff...



◀ Incoming

Forsaken
M1 Tank Platoon 2
Motorhead
Starship Titanic

Crap games

There are some games that you can leave in the middle of the room with a big sign next to them saying "Please steal me" and you still can't get rid of the bloody things...



◀ Red Baro 2

Stratjams
Queen: The Eye
Sim Safari
Sole Survivor

Incoming

PC
ZONE
Classic



(Left) Hang on, weren't you in *Wing Commander*?
(Above) You're dumped behind a gun turret mounted on a ship. What do you do? Fire. A lot.

We told **Warren Christmas** to go and play this game and kill lots of things. In return he would be rewarded with flashing lights and colours inside his head.

E

EVER GET THE FEELING YOU'VE BEEN had? My friend's flatmate – who we'll call Nathan (if only because that's his name) – must have. You see, when he's not wasting his money on dodgy Oasis bootlegs, he's invariably throwing it at

crappy Nintendo 64 games.

Time after time he's paid – gulp – £60 for a game just because of a big-name licence or pretty pictures on the back of the box. Only recently, he picked up *FIFA '98: Road To World Cup '98* (which, in fairness, isn't too bad) when he should have got *International Superstar Soccer 64* (which is bloody brilliant). Then he bought *San Francisco Rush* (utter shite) when he could have got... Well, there aren't any good driving games on the N64. But you get the point.

Now you, dear reader, are not so stupid, are you? You wouldn't be persuaded to part with your well-earned dosh for a PC game like, say, *Incoming* merely on the basis of flashy graphics, would you? Would you? No, of course not. You read *PC Zone* because you want to find out how good the actual game is. And, hey, I'm here to tell you just that.

What's the story?

It's 2008. Having ignored increased sightings of UFOs throughout the early years of the new millennium, the world's governing bodies have finally swung into action, having seen aliens attack the international base on the moon and set up camp near the Arctic. Work has been under way on a secret Anomaly

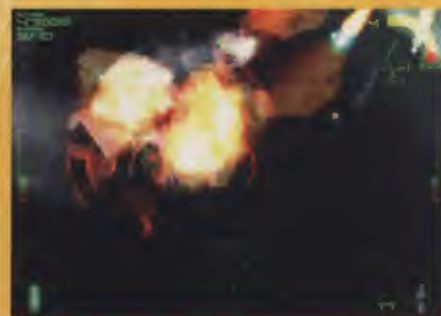
Detection And Tracking Array in Kenya, and after eight months the construction is nearly complete when...

It's another of those game storylines carefully crafted on the backs of fag packets during lunch breaks down the pub. Suffice to say that this is not a heavily plot-driven game. It may fall (albeit vaguely) into the same mission-based, action sim category, but *Incoming* is a far cry from the games in the *Wing Commander* series, with their crappy, over-the-top FMV sequences. Sequences which, when you think about it, actually tell the story while you – the player – are left to perform pretty much the same tasks again and again.

No, *Incoming* is different. It has no characters to



“Seriously frantic stuff with an emphasis on no-nonsense arcade action.”



(Top right) Shield generators, once taken out, give full line-of-sight access to these protected alien installations. (Middle pair) Ka-boooooom! (Bottom right) You can also play from a third-person perspective, but it makes the game a lot harder.



(Above) Gratuitous particle explosion shot #13 from a set of 32.

◀ 'relate' to, and has just a minimal amount of text and cut-scenes (which actually use the main game engine) between missions. And it doesn't need anything more, because you *play* the story.

Whether it's shooting down alien attack fighters and mother ships, following waypoints and delivering supplies, putting out fires, protecting cruise liners and oil rigs or destroying ancient monuments, it's all down to you, buster.

The Red Alert bit (sort of)

Incoming has three single-player gameplay modes: Arcade mode lets you select any craft (from the allied or alien forces) and choose your own scenario, the object being to collect points. Various power-ups are littered around which increase weapon power, armour and so on. In Campaign Action mode (consider this to be the meat of the game) the object is to work through each of the ten different scenarios. The Campaign Tactics mode is very similar (albeit with six scenarios), but every now and again you'll find that the in-your-face action

of *Incoming* halts as you're forcibly sucked into... a point-and-click strategy bit. No, really.

Here you have to defend your base by assigning targets to the forces available and... well, who gives a damn? The rotatable 3D view may look nice, but the user interface is pants, the options available are limited and, more importantly, all this faffing about just gets in the way of the real action. But, just to repeat, the Campaign Tactics mode is only an *option*. Right?



No, you don't get to fly a Space Shuttle. But then they don't have weapons, do they?

One minute you're piloting a jet fighter or a Comanche helicopter, the next you're thrown at the helm of a ship's gun turret or zipping around an alien planet in a Surface Skimmer. And almost every minute, you're under attack from wave after wave of alien craft. Make no mistake, it's seriously frantic stuff with a firm emphasis on no-nonsense arcade action.

True, *Incoming* features Arcade and mission-based Campaign play (see 'The Red Alert bit' panel, left), but even with the latter you're still gunning to get points on a high-score table; and yes, you lose a 'life' if you screw up (by either receiving too much damage or destroying a mission-critical object).

Hey now

So it's 'just' a fancy-dan 3D shoot 'em up, right? Well, leaving aside the tactical option (again, see panel, left), yes, I suppose



Get into space and you're then armed with some shit-hot missiles.

All around the world

Here's a brief guide to the places you'll visit in *Incoming*, and some of the things you have to do to complete it in Campaign Action mode. There are ten individual missions in each of the first six scenarios,

and a single objective in each of the last four. And if you think we're giving too much away here, you'd better not read the breakdown of scenarios in the game's manual.



SCENARIO 1 (KENYA, AFRICA)

Alien forces are closing in on the unfinished UFO tracking facility. Among other objectives, you need to deliver supplies, defend tanks and stop alien bombers, using everything from 'copters and jet fighters to tanks and gun turrets.



SCENARIO 3 (NORTH ATLANTIC)

The aliens are moving out towards a second base near Iceland. You have to defend an oil field from alien attack and drifting icebergs (no, really), sink subs and protect a cruise liner. Imagining Kate Winslett is aboard helps motivation.



SCENARIO 5 (THE MOON)

A dimensional portal structure, used to transport the aliens across star systems, has been found. Your task is to destroy it plus all other installations and enemy craft. Heavy going but, hey, the explosions look even better against the dark backdrop.



SCENARIO 2 (THE ARCTIC)

Then it goes a bit *Empire Strikes Back* (er, sort of). Earth forces have set up operations in the Arctic near the alien base. You need to destroy shield generators, take out enemy ack-ack guns and installations and defend allied aircraft.



SCENARIO 4 (CALIFORNIA, USA)

An alien moon base has been detected and the allies are preparing for an assault. Yes, it is tempting to let the Yanks burn, but you need to defend the Space Shuttles, put out fires (nice touch) and recover alien fighters for research.



SCENARIO 6 (UNKNOWN PLANET IN THE CRAB NEBULA)

It's the big one. You're on the enemy planet and suddenly it all goes a bit *Stargate*. Wiping out the baddies is the object, of course. New gameplay elements include a smart new *Star Wars*-style Surface Skimmer and Zeppelin-like enemies, and a not-so-smart tunnel section.

it is. But a bloody good one. And besides, there are some modest simulation-like elements. While you never have to jostle with 101 key commands or dick about choosing different weapons, controlling the jet fighter and, in particular, the copter does take a fair bit of skill. And the environments are surprisingly detailed with a decent amount of real-time action going on around you.

Also, *Incoming* is based on land, sea, the moon and an alien planet – a refreshing change from the deep space of most futuristic combat sims, and something which definitely has a positive effect on gameplay. Even though you're equipped with a radar, it's still genuinely exciting to steamroller over a hill and find yourself being charged by six or seven hover tanks. And if you're busily fighting off ground units and hear the cry "Incoming!", don't be surprised if the first you actually see of an alien bomber is its huge shadow cast over the

Space Shuttle simulator?
Er, nope.



SCENARIOS 7, 8, 9, 10 (BACK TO EARTH...)

There's a bit of a twist in the plot and it all goes a bit weird as, rather disappointingly, you return to previously charted territories. We won't spoil it by revealing the objectives, but the picture above is a bit of a clue. Sort of.



(Above left) Gratuitous explosion shot. Looks nice, doesn't it? (Above right) Earlier we were protecting this oil rig, now we're taking it out. There's a twist in the plot, see?



It's better, people

Ultimately, while *Incoming* is not the most complex of games, the Campaign mode still offers much more than the term '3D shoot 'em up' suggests. Some might say the almost non-stop shooting gets repetitive, but the impressive variety in the missions and the almost constant introduction

of new elements and environments will

definitely keep you coming back for more. And although it's not as deep as some in terms of gameplay options (you only get two types of weapon at a time, for example), it's still head and shoulders above most space combat sims. Yes, even Rage Software's own *Darklight Conflict*.

In short: it's as fun as it looks. Just for once, all those people who don't read reviews and buy games purely on the strength of pretty pictures on the packaging are gonna find themselves playing a very, very enjoyable game. They don't deserve it, you know. **Z**

ground. Ooh, it's just like *Independence Day* (the crappy film, not the really crappy game). Whatever...

You'd expect a game which requires a 3D accelerator to look pretty good, wouldn't you? But, as you can see from the screenshots, *Incoming* really does look absolutely stunning, utilising every effect your 3D card can muster (yep, even mip-mapping and tri-linear filtering for Voodoo 2 owners – talking of which, check out the feature on page 127). The explosion effects in particular are just awesome, constantly lighting up the sky like a Champagne Supernova (whatever the hell that is). The (Dolby Surround-encoded) sound is also excellent, with the kind of booming effects sub-woofers were made for. Oh, and if you've got one of Microsoft's Force Feedback joysticks, you'll find it feels good too.

What, you've got friends?

On top of all this spurt-worthy single-player action there is a comprehensive list of multi-player options which cover deathmatch and team-play themes. If you haven't got a network, don't fret – there's a (weird, squashed) split-screen mode (below left) to satiate that 'kill my friends' frenzy that often afflicts every gamer at some point in their life. If you *have* got a network, however... well, you're a spoilt bastard, basically.

Of the three play modes available, Team Play is probably the most fun. Here, up to six players attack or defend an installation from alien attack, depending on the side they choose. But to work, Team Play does require an even number of entrants, which can be a problem if you're let down by unreliable mates. The two other multi-play modes, Defense Force and Body Count, are 'humans versus AI' and 'deathmatch' games respectively. Both work extremely well and suffer little from latency. Unfortunately, *Incoming* lacks an Internet Play option, but then we can't have everything, can we?



In Perspective

We haven't seen a decent 3D shoot 'em up for quite some time, and certainly not one with multiple vehicles as featured in *Incoming*.

Incoming

Forsaken (see review page 80)

Darklight Conflict

Wing Commander: Prophecy

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P133 (P166 recommended)

Graphics: SVGA (4Mb or AGP 3D accelerator required)

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick

Note: Also supports modem and 8-player network play, and features Dolby Surround Sound



Score

Big bangs for the bucks.

90

Price: £39.99

Release date: April

Publisher: Rage Software

Telephone: 0121 452 8400

Website: www.rage.co.uk

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

FORMULA 1

97

"And now, as he pulls into the pits, I'm going to stop my startwatch."

Damon Hill



IT MAKES MORE SENSE THAN MURRAY!

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PC
ROM

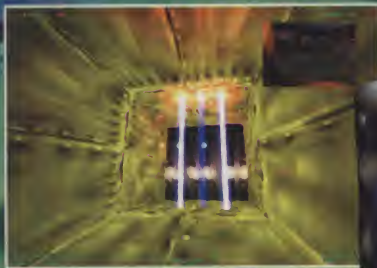
FIA
FORMULA 1
WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIP

PlayStation

Forsaken



(Left) Pyrotechnic action of the highest quality thanks to 3DFX.
(Right) What lurks beyond?



This reviewer is forsaken.
No, of course he isn't, he's
Steve Hill.

Y

OU PROBABLY THINK WE HAVE AN EASY life here at PC Zone. That when not poncing around the world, we are to be found sat on our arses, playing games for money. Don't believe the hype. It's a living hell.

If only we'd tried harder we could have secured soul-destroying, mind-crushing 'proper' jobs; thriving, driving, flexible initiative, maximising our potential. Unfortunately, a sick chain has led us to this hateful basement, where we're forced to sift through the monthly gaming detritus for your benefit. It's a thankless task, the moribund atmosphere punctured only by random cries of despair. Where did it all go wrong? Very occasionally though, a game comes along that almost makes it all worthwhile. *Forsaken* is one such game. Oh yes.

Assuming the art department have done their job (whatever those guys do), these well-crafted words should be decorated with some of the finest screenshots known to man. The real thing is even more impressive. Reach out and touch, it doesn't get much better. Applicable adjectives are many and varied, so consult your thesaurus for 'staggering', 'astounding', 'liquid', 'televisual', and probably 'visceral', whatever that means. Alternatively, simply try 'unbelievably-lievable'. And all as smooth as an eel. Developers Probe have created an engine. Nobody in the real world knows what an engine is, but theirs is great, and they're not letting anyone else have it. And who can blame them? It's a beautiful thing, making *Forsaken* arguably the slickest, best-looking game ever to grace the PC. Hateful marketing skunks

**"Forsaken is a game
that you will play in your mind
long after turning off your PC."**

often bandy about glib phrases such as 'total immersion', but when you find yourself reeling back in your leather swivel chair and cursing aloud in amazement, there has to be something going on.

It's the same thing

So what's it all about? For those who haven't been paying attention, *Forsaken* is a first-person, futuristic 3D shoot 'em up offering 360 degrees of motion. In seeking a simple comparison, the game *Descent* springs readily to mind, despite the vehement protestations of both Probe and



What would Freud make of this?

Bees, thousands of 'em.

All the music in *Forsaken* has been recorded by in-house collective The Swarm (also the name of a bee disaster movie starring Michael Caine), and is fairly lively junglist massive. There is also the possibility of EMI releasing one track, 'Pure Bitch Power' (feat. MC Burglar), as a single. We've heard it with our ears, and it definitely has a good beat to it, although it treads a fine line between laid-back apres-dinner party drum 'n' bass and novelty summer hit 'Outhere Brothers' cheese. "Boom boom boom, let me hear you say hosepipe ban."

Levels yer devils

Forsaken features 15 single-player levels (plus some secret ones). All different in design, and many are loosely based on particular films. We've managed to detect elements of *The Poseidon Adventure*, *Silent Running*, *Beneath The Planet Of The Apes*, *Star Wars* and *Bend Over Babes*.



1 VOLCANO



2 ABANDONED SUBWAY



3 NUCLEAR POWER STATION



4 THERMAL NUCLEAR RESEARCH BASE



5 FEDERAL BANK VAULT



6 PRISON SHIP



7 ASTEROID BASE



8 BIO-SPHERE



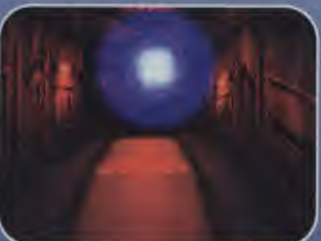
9 SUBTERRANEAN DECONTAM COMPLEX



10 CAPSIZED SHIP



11 ORBITAL SPACE STATION



12 SHUTTLE BAY



13 MILITARY BASE



14 TLOLOC TEMPLE



15 ANCIENT TEMPLE

Forsaken's publishers, Acclaim. For newcomers, *Descent* involved flying around tunnels shooting robots. *Forsaken* also involves flying around tunnels shooting robots. Of course it's like *Descent*, and in denying this they look really stupid every time they open their mouths. The point is that *Descent* was a brilliant game, but that was then and this is now. *Forsaken* betters its spiritual forebear in pretty much every aspect, and the leap in technology is like the difference between 78rpm records and compact discs.

For those who require a story to justify spending hours in front of their PCs... It's the end of the world, thanks to a freak nuclear accident. You are one of 16 scavengers raiding the ravaged planet for your own personal gain, equipped with a fairly nifty anti-gravity cycle. This has given Probe licence to go to town with the characters, and they have introduced some very strange bounty hunters, all with their own speech files, some of which border on *Carry On* territory. Witness: "What a climax," "I've been aching for a real weapon," and "You weren't hard at all" from one of the female bikers. It's a Croydon thing. Incidentally, one of the onboard computer

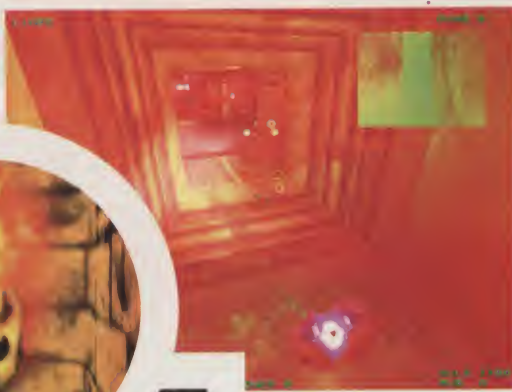
voices is provided by Brenda, Probe's receptionist, and you will learn to love the way she says "Shield" in her dulcet South London tones.

Save me

In single-player mode, at its basest level *Forsaken* works like a platform game, rewarding your brain for cleverness. There are no dynamic saves as such, but rather restart points that pop up intermittently throughout the levels. Although this occasionally necessitates covering dead ground, it works in that it offers a tangible reward for making progress. Which isn't easy. Relentless sinister robots block every turn. They will not deviate, and take a lot of killing. Many follow a set path, but the airborne ones flock around a

That'll be one of them there futuristic anti-gravity pioncycles.





The attention to detail in *Forsaken* is astounding, and each level features extremely varied colour schemes and designs.



Oh my God! Oh Jesus Christ! Oh no!

predetermined leader, with a new one immediately appointed upon its demise. Some even hide behind pillars and attempt to lure you out so they can kill you in the face. Bastards. Such is the realism, enemies are sometimes hard to pick out against the background; but no one said it was going to be easy. Your bike is equipped with a glorified wing mirror, which is particularly useful, and events such as doors opening can also be witnessed in your mind's eye. The primary and secondary weapons are many and varied, ranging from a basic pulsar, through lasers and homing missiles, to a titan, for when you absolutely *have* to kill every last muthafucker in the room. *Forsaken* certainly can't be accused of 'grey corridor syndrome', with some elaborate use of colour and ridiculously intricate graphical detail. Even lens flare has thankfully been kept to an acceptable level. The later levels are immense, and some sections involve a modicum of thought. For instance, shooting a switch through a gap in some boxes will instigate a fork-lift truck to shift them out of the way. Which is nice.

Forsaken is a game that you will play in your mind long after turning your off you PC, with the game's coloured light and music haunting you in your dreams. It's a massive game in every sense of the word, and not owning it would be a grave oversight. Obviously, feel free to steal it or 'tape' it, but do have a look. *Descent* is dead. *Forsaken* lives. The year is one. **Z**

They came from paradise

The multi-player aspect of *Forsaken* is a good thing, and features a number of different rule sets.

Bounty Hunter involves keeping hold of some bounty for as long as possible, despite having a large target above your head when in possession. There are also some flag games, and of course a no-mess, no-fuss,

full-on free-for-all. There are a host of specific Deathmatch levels, and they automatically vary in size according to the number of players.

Forsaken multi-player is a very vicious game, and if the *Quake II* bores could stop dribbling down their chins for long enough to play it, they would find it a viable alternative.



In Perspective

The full-on 360-degree thing is clearly a lot harder to do than churning out *Quake* clones, which explains why there have been nowhere near as many. *Descent II* has ruled for some time, but its reign is finally over. The forthcoming *Descent III* will have to go some to beat this little beauty. Your move, Interplay...

Forsaken

Descent

Descent II

Tunnel B1

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P166

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick



Score

It'll never catch on.



Price: £39.99

Release date: May

Publisher: Acclaim

Telephone: 0171 344 5000

Website: www.acclaim.com

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Personal Computers

INCOMING

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every breath they take
could be your last



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AT-AT guns, Track Tanks, Sand Skimmers, Hover tanks, Stealth Sea Craft, Attack Helicopters, F22 & S/UTOL Aircraft + Alien Fighters to name but a few

3D spatialised sound

"Incoming is likely to be nothing short of spectacular"
PC ZONE

"Astonishingly beautiful"
PC GAMER

"Incoming's technology enables the game to achieve a graphical look and frame rate similar to that seen on the very latest arcade machines"
PC FORMAT



3D ACCELERATOR
CARD REQUIRED

65 diverse missions across
6 spectacular worlds

Full Force Feedback support

2 player split screen

Modem to Modem and

Serial link

8 player LAN Network play

Atmospheric soundtrack

Stunning lighting FX



M1 Tank Platoon II

Andrew Wright loves anything to do with tanks, so we gave him MicroProse's new M1 Tank Platoon II and a box of tissues and told him to go away and play.

D

ESPIE AN UNHEALTHY OBSESSION WITH armoured vehicles, I've always preferred flight sims to tank sims. In a flight sim, you've got everything at your fingertips. In a tank sim, you've got to do the job of three men – drive the tank, fire the gun and command the tank – plus any awkward bolt-on strategy elements, such as commanding platoons and ordering artillery strikes, just to add to the overall sense of frustration.

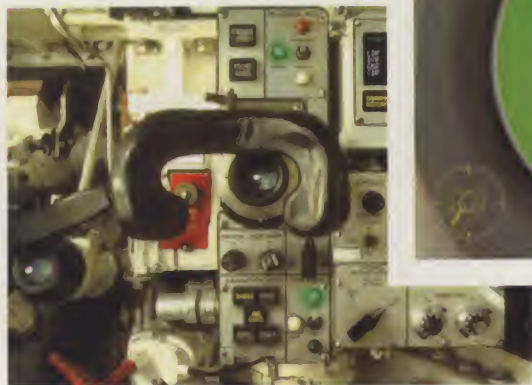
Fortunately, *M1 Tank Platoon II* isn't just a 3Dfx rehash of the nine-year-old original. It's far more than just a tank sim, it's an incredibly realistic simulation, not of a single M1A2 Abrams tank but of modern small-unit warfare. Sure, you get to command your tank, but it will do whatever it has to do without any input from you. Using a sophisticated computerised battlefield management system, you control the other tank platoons, infantry, artillery and air strikes, and watch them go to work on the bad guys in glorious 3Dfx-enhanced technicolour.

Soldier soldier

On a decent PC, the graphics are fast and incredibly smooth, and everything from the tracer rounds to the explosions looks and feels superb. The vehicles are accurately modelled in full 3D, as are the infantry. Yes, infantry. The game includes individual soldiers modelled as realistically as the vehicles. They lie down, fire, crouch and run; they even mount and dismount from their fighting vehicles.

Add some terrific sound effects such as explosions, MGs and gunfire, as well as the atmospheric radio chatter as other elements report events taking place, and you've got a deep-immersion battlefield simulation with months of solid gameplay behind it. That includes the optional but important training sessions, fixed scenarios, five different campaign settings and random battles.

No two scenarios will ever be the same,



Shooting up infantry hiding in the buildings.

because although the AI is programmed to follow standard Russian armoured doctrine when playing Russian units, for instance, it makes different decisions each time. On a tactical level, the AI makes vehicles use terrain features like ridges to take up hull-down positions and hide behind already burning tanks to escape detection by thermal sights.

"When it comes to real-time war games, it just doesn't get any better than this."

The real 'bugger me' bit comes the first time you see infantry up close. I'd pushed my platoon carefully up a hill covered with burning vehicles. The first section (two tanks) was first, followed by the second section on overwatch, just like the training manual says. Then I realised that the burning vehicles were BMPs – troop transports. Suddenly two rockets came flying towards me, launched by two soldiers with tubes. Small arms fire started bouncing off the tank as a dozen previously unseen soldiers let rip.

I lost two tanks to hand-held anti-tank missiles in the close-quarters fight, and learned a lesson or two in the process. In fact I only got rid of the enemy infantry by standing in the turret hatch and wiping them out with the machine gun! Should I have brought down an artillery barrage first? Probably. But I'll know next time...

Tanks and things

The M1A2 Abrams has two special features. First comes the Inter-Vehicular Information System, or IVIS, which gives tank commanders constant updates on the position of friendly units and enables command and control without the need for radio instructions. Second is the CITV, an all-round thermal or telescopic viewer that enables the commander to scan the



(Left) Nice rendering – and the knobs work too. (Above) An M1A2 in the thermal sights.



area and assign targets for the gunner when he's free. Both transfer well to the game – in 'hunter-killer' mode you scan, pick targets, and the gunner never sits twiddling his thumbs.

If you feel like taking over the tank driving or gunnery, you can do it, of course, and the superb graphics make it great fun. As commander, you can also pop up out of the hatch and blast away with your own personal machine gun. While you do that, the other crew members – and the other vehicles – get on with the job in hand.

Heavy metal

Some 70 vehicles are included in the game, from humvees to heavy tanks like the Challenger and the T90, with 80 weapons such as MGs, TOW missiles, anti-air stuff and various tank guns. Artillery fire missions are there too, as is air support from Apache helicopters, A10 'Warthogs' and US Marine Harriers.

Attention to detail is impressive. The game includes all variants of tanks and AFVs currently in use – even the minor differences between Russian T72 and T90 tanks are accurately modelled. Even better is the way vehicles rock on their tracks when they're hit by guns or missiles, and moving vehicles that are knocked out will continue moving for some time before halting. Most tanks blow up quite realistically, although some simply stop with the gun pointing downwards. Others explode with the turret



(Top left) Transparent smoke, courtesy of a 3Dfx card. (Left) The 16-man platoon needs careful management in campaign mode. (Above right) The commander's screen – CITV on the left, IVIS on the right.



(Above left) Vision blocks give the commander 360-degree vision. (Above right) Manning the MG as an infantry squad advances. (Circled) Burn, baby, burn.



leaping into the air and falling to the ground. Hit a man with a machine gun and he'll even throw his arms in the air before collapsing in a heap. Hardly politically correct these days, but bloody great fun.

Terrain is the least effective feature, as woods are no-go areas – you can't hide in the edges, although you can use them to protect a flank. Buildings can be flattened too, but it's the subtle elevation changes that are important to vehicles, providing protection and concealment.

There are faults, inevitably. The interface is a awkward at times, especially when dealing with the main armament, and it takes a lot of playing time before you get to understand the way it works. The manual isn't much help, either. It's also very difficult to split platoons into sections, and occasionally platoons take it upon themselves to move in strange directions. The lack of Internet play is a shame, but it does support up to five players on a network and two via modem, although I couldn't make it work on a serial link at all.

These are just niggles though.

M1 Tank Platoon 2 is a superb game which shoots straight into my Number 1 slot. When it comes to real-time war games go, it just doesn't get any better than this. **Z**



In Perspective

M1 Tank Platoon II is quite unlike any other war sim on the market. The attention to detail is quite astounding, and the fact that it looks so good is an absolute bonus. Be warned though: it's pretty heavyweight, so if you want an alternative to *Armoured Fist 2* you'd better look elsewhere. This is serious stuff, make no mistake.

M1 Tank Platoon II

Armoured Fist 2

Imagic's M1A2 Abrams

Tech Specs

Memory: 8Mb (16Mb recomm'd)

Processor: P90 (P166 essential)

Graphics: SVGA (3Dfx recomm'd)

Sound: Direct X compatible

Controls: Joystick and mouse required



Score

The best modern-day war sim ever, full stop.



Price: ETBA

Release date: June '98

Publisher: MicroProse

Telephone: 01454 893898

Website: www.microprose.com

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Personal Computers

Black Dahlia

The 'pop' band Spear Of Destiny were a load of crap, thinks secret neo-fascist, black magic occultist and 'pop critic' Paul Rose.

7

IT'S A WELL-KNOWN FACT THAT DEAR old Adolf Hitler had a bit of an interest in esoteric matters relating to black magic and the occult. He was so messed up in the head that he believed the fabled Spear Of Destiny – the big pointy stick responsible for piercing Christ's side while he hung from the cross – would help him win World War II. Who knows what happened there, then – perhaps its batteries were low? Still, it's an interesting enough subject to ensure we won't switch off a BBC2 documentary entitled *Hitler's Interest In The Occult*, even if we accidentally tuned into it while searching for post-watershed sauciness.

It's also a well-known fact that interactive movies are, by and large, about as entertaining as a flannel hanging from a drainpipe. Past examples of the genre have fallen flat on their ugly arses, and deservedly so. Therefore the question we are left with is: would an interactive movie relating to a subject as engrossing as Hitler's interest in the occult be a good thing, or a bad thing?

Good or bad?

Set in 1941, just before the USA got itself involved in WWII, *Black Dahlia* fits you out in the prerequisite trilby and trenchcoat of a fledgling FBI agent investigating a series of brutal murders – a background that alleges to be "inspired by actual events". Of course, as is the nature with these things, the murders are but the filthy scum atop a cup of rancid conspiracy coffee. It isn't long before your investigations have lead you halfway around the world to the war-torn streets of central Europe and the heart of the Nazi Reich.

Fascist or communist?

Via an interface that's as user-friendly

(Right) Would you buy a used car from this man? (Below) Lush graphics and more than 60 puzzles will keep you interested.



The plot is pretty solid, and for once the production values are high – now there's a first!

as it is unoriginal, *Black Dahlia* drags you – in true, pre-rendered, 360-degree-o-vision – through a plot with more twists and puzzles than you'd have any right to expect. Naturally, being an interactive movie and everything, there are plenty of 'real' people populating the game, including Dennis Hopper (*Blue Velvet*, *Speed*), who puts in a lengthy cameo appearance.

While much of the game is rather linear, the entire thing is well acted and slickly enough produced so that most of the time you barely notice that this is 'yet another tedious interactive movie'.

Freak or unique?

There are some 60 puzzles in *Black Dahlia*, which require anything from sorting through newspaper clippings and piecing together evidence, to dealing with tricky combination locks and the like. While you can appreciate that they had to be there for this to qualify as a 'game', we'd have been just as happy to kick back and let the entire thing play itself out.

Like olives stuffed with anchovies, or sex utilising a variety of 'bells and whistles', interactive movies are an acquired taste, and by now you'll probably already have made your mind up whether to buy *Black Dahlia* or not. But if you're still undecided whether to leap head-first into that whole genre pool, you could do a lot worse than testing the water with this baby. **Z**



In Perspective

The interactive movie will never make everyone happy all the time (there again, what will?), but provided it has a cracking storyline and suitably high production values – as with *Black Dahlia* – fans of the genre should find it a top laugh. And any game that has Dennis 'Nutter' Hopper in it can't be all that bad, can it?

Black Dahlia

Blade Runner

Broken Sword 2

Phantasmagoria

Journeyman Project 3

Teck Specs

Memory: 16Mb min

Processor: P90 or faster

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse



Score

Slick, but not to everyone's taste.

79

Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Take 2 Interactive

Telephone: 01753 923 1221

Website: www.take2europe.com

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Available May 1998
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Motorhead



Win some, lose some, it's all the same to Steve Hill.



LET'S GET THE NOMENCLATURE HILARITIES out of the way: Motorhead are a veteran heavy metal band whose grizzled lead singer appears to be sporting face-mounted Rice Krispies; *Motorhead* the game is an arcade racer out of Swedish developers Digital Illusions, the team responsible for 1995's mesmeric *Pinball Illusions*. Whatever the musical connotations, *Motorhead* is a fairly logical name for a car game, and certainly more relevant and credible than *Sepultura* or *The Tygers Of Pan Tang*. Arf arf. Next.

Arcade racers are currently ten a penny on the PC, and the Zone network hard-core have recently been enamoured by the excellent *Ultimate Race Pro*, with many late-night sessions masking the emptiness of our pointless lives. In common with any normal, right-thinking person, we fear change, and the arrival of *Motorhead* was therefore greeted with some suspicion, like the new kid at school with a fancy sports bag. Initial standoffishness ensued, but tentative approaches found it to be quite friendly, and within an hour we were whooping like children (before reconvening to the pub to drink like men). A fickle crowd, we are easily appeased by coloured lights and music in our heads, and *Motorhead* features both in large amounts.

Play, your card's right

By now you will almost certainly have cast your mince pies (eyes) over the surrounding taxi cabs (grabs) and found them

"A ridiculously fast, fantastic-looking, intense racing experience."

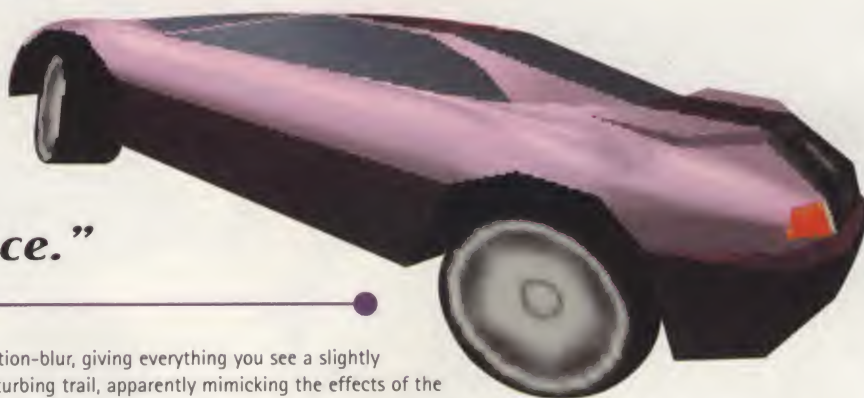
to be objects of rare beauty. Correct. Running through 3Dfx or PowerVR, with all the options switched on, *Motorhead* looks absolutely stunning and is a match for pretty much anything on the PC. Lens flare, sparks, smoke, skid marks, all that business. You need not worry though, as poor people are also catered for, the graphics looking far from knackered in software only. It is much more than a shallow aesthetic showpiece though, and is in fact a ludicrously playable game.



The first thing that strikes you is the incredible speed. Shit off shovels, rats up drainpipes, racing snakes and all other tenuous velocity-

based similes are left trailing in its wake. The sense of speed is palpable, as is the feeling of motion. To labour the point further, there is also an option to turn on

Due to the design of the courses and speed of the cars, grabbing some 'phat' air is common.



motion-blur, giving everything you see a slightly disturbing trail, apparently mimicking the effects of the crazy LSD killer acid drug. Due to the design of the courses and the way the perspective works, *Motorhead* is the kind of game that has you lurching around in your chair like a simpleton. Clearly there is very little dignity in this course of action, but scientists have proved that it does actually make you drive better.



(Far left) The names of the drivers hover above their cars, as if by magic. (Left) Having a pursuing car nudge your bumper is enough to inspire The Fear.



Some narrow sections necessitate unorthodox tactics.

Future shock

Stylistically, *Motorhead* is a kind of *WipeOut* on wheels, with a *Blade Runner*-style intro hinting at its futuristic pretensions. In common with most modern cars, they all look fairly similar, but vary in terms of speed, acceleration and grip. Consequently, certain cars are more suited to particular courses, and selection needs to be thought about for at least a couple of seconds. The handling is fairly solid and – this being the future – the cars are constructed from damage-proof material, making high-speed collisions no more than an



Driving on two wheels can occasionally happen, which may be useful for impressing girls but is of little help when it comes to winning races.

Hur-hur, he said 'horn'

Not really worth 40 quid on their own, but *Motorhead* does feature a vast array of horn sounds, which are ideal for winding up opponents in multi-play. Amid the various screeches, wails and donkey sounds – there's even a Homer Simpson 'Doh!' – the highlight is simply called Benny. Why? Because it's the theme tune of erstwhile king of comedy, the late, great Benny Hill (no relation). Even on the hundredth listen it still manages to raise a laugh. Inspired.

Choovooooon!

Despite sharing a name with the band responsible for the rousing 'The Ace Of Spades', the fact that Gremlin didn't use said tune in the game is a shame, as it would have provided some tasty icing on an already sickly cake. The music in *Motorhead* was all recorded in-house by Digital Illusions and, despite some fairly vocal protestations from Zone's techno massive, is actually quite listenable, mixing some up-front cheesebag with a couple of arms-in-the-air anthems and even a little bit of liquid dub. Whoever was responsible for 'dropping some science' clearly knows their business.



(Above) These modern cars all look the same, don't they? (Far left) "Oi, mate, your lights are on!" In common with the trusty Volvo, headlights are kept on at all times. (Circled) A car, tomorrow.

irritation. The invincibility factor also opens the door to some ruthless tactics, with ramming opponents off the road proving a viable strategy. Furthermore, the ability to look behind enables you to weave in front of pursuing cars in a totally unsportsmanlike fashion. This isn't a one-way thing though, as due to the unique AI of the other drivers they are capable of some dirty tricks themselves. They are also fallible, and it is not uncommon to come across a multiple pile-up during the course of a race.

Anti-nowhere league

Individual races are fully customisable, but the greatest challenge comes in playing out a league, with points awarded in a pseudo Grand Prix fashion – three divisions, eight drivers, with promotion and relegation going to the top and bottom two respectively. This system really forces the learning curve, with new tracks and cars made available with each promotion. At first you find yourself going up and down like a whore's drawers, drifting between the bottom two divisions like the Chester City of the car world – too good for the third but woefully out of their depth in the second. Eventually, either due to a freak result or hard work, a foothold will be secured which can then be built upon in a push for the top. Once unlocked, the courses can be raced either in single-player or network mode, enabling practice to be gained before mounting a championship challenge. For the solo player, this league system gives *Motorhead* a distinct advantage over *Ultimate Race Pro*. While the latter's DeathMatch mode is undeniably superb, not everyone will have the facilities to use it. With *Motorhead*, what you see is what you get: a ridiculously fast, fantastic-looking, intense racing experience. Nice. 2

In Perspective

After almost 'pulling ourselves off' over *Ultimate Race Pro* last issue, in comparison to *Motorhead* it now feels like towing a caravan – through mud. It does cost twice as much, but if you can afford it it's worth the money.

Motorhead

Ultimate Race Pro

Network Q RAC Rally

Pod

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P90

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: Direct Sound compatible cards

Controls: Keyboard, joypad, mouse, steering wheel



Score

The Ace Of Games.

90

Price: £39.99

Release date: April

Publisher: Gremlin Interactive

Telephone: 01142 753423

Website: www.gremlin.co.uk

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GAME REELS BACK



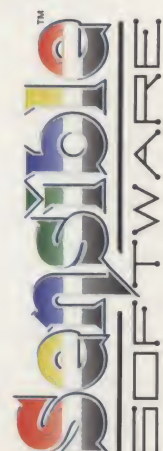
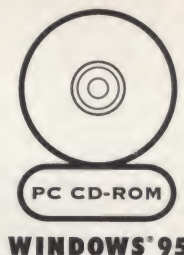
• ENGLAND •

1	GK	David Seaman	
2	CB	Gareth Southgate	
3	CB	Tony Adams	
4	CB	Tari Campbell	
5	VP	Graeme Le Saux	
6	MF	David Parry	
7	MF	Paul Ince	
8	MF	Paul Gascoigne	
9	MF	David Beckham	
10	F	Teddy Sheringham	
11	F	Alan Shearer	
12	CB	Wendie Renard	
13	CB	Sam Kerr	
14	MF	John Stones	
15	MF	James Ward	
16	F	Lee Keen	
17	F	Lee Keen	

Clash! Green Huddle

CONTINUE < X > CONTINUE





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The beautiful game is back.



ENGLAND

TUNISIA

G	David Seaman					
CB	Gareth Southgate					
CB	Tony Adams					
CB	Sol Campbell					
LB	Graeme Le Saux					
M	David Batty					
M	Paul Ince					
	Paul Gascoigne					
	David Beckham					
	Edy Sherlingham					
	Alan Shearer					
	Nigel Martyn					
	Gary Neville					
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Red Baron II



It was a time of war. The Great War, to be exact. Paul Presley is our man in the trenches, looking for his flying scarf and goggles.

F

EW THINGS IN THIS CRAZY MIXED UP world are as depressing as finding out that principles you've always held dear are nothing but false ideals. Since playing Sierra's much hyped sequel *Red Baron II*, I have discovered to my horror that my long-held belief that gameplay will always triumph over graphical niceties is as false as a porn starlet's chest.

Despite all the hype surrounding this long-awaited and much-delayed follow-up to one of gaming lore's most classic flight sims, *Red Baron II* is quite clearly flawed at a fundamental yet all too superficial level. It's a crying shame, but unfortunately the wealth of detail to be found in the game's historical content, the flight dynamics and the campaign structure simply cannot disguise the incredibly poor graphical detail. Like so many, I thought I'd be able to see through the graphical quagmire and get to grips with what always promised to be a brilliant sequel to a groundbreaking original game. Isn't it funny how things change?

Tri-linear filtering over the trenches

Unusually for this day and age, *Red Baron II* is a flight simulator that does not feature any 3D accelerator support at all. While those people who do not have the seemingly prerequisite bit of kit in their PC would be inclined to let out a whoop of delight on hearing this news, allow me to tell you before your rejoicing reaches a fever pitch that *Red Baron II* doesn't look too good on-screen. Compared to last year's *Flying Corps* it looks dated and earthy, and when you compare it to the kind of visual delights offered by modern fighter sims such as *F-22 ADF* or *JSF* it looks positively dire. In fact, even without 3D support just about every other flight sim we've seen over the past 12 months or so can more than match it for detail and on-screen lushness.

Of course, you might think that this doesn't effect the way the game plays. But it does. You just get the feeling that the developers have given up and gone home. The landscape texturing doesn't even reach the edge of the visual horizon, for Chrissake! When airborne at a few thousand feet you can



"It tries hard in some areas, but unfortunately just falls flat on its face in so many others."

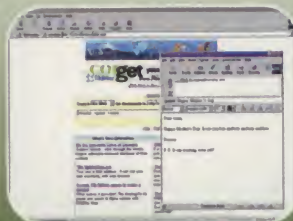
see untextured hills looming just ahead, giving the impression that everything beyond a few miles is surrounded by fog.

Just when you could be thinking that Sierra might have done something clever and concentrated on low-level detailing (after all, WWI dogfights took place just a few hundred feet above the ground), let me tell you that the ground objects aren't much cop either. The buildings are pretty plain and seem to 'pop up' out of nowhere (a fatal

Internet schminternet

You can't make this shit up. Several issues ago I waxed lyrical on the merits of Sierra's Internet Gaming System and how playing on-line poker with Americans was really a good thing. Well fate, being the bitchwhoremother she

is, has turned around and spat in my face as expected. *Red Baron II* apparently has SIGS compatibility along with its other networking options (which for some inexplicable reason force you to play in a window rather than full-screen). The thing is, it just didn't work. It tried to. It logged on to the service the first time I



accessed it. But the place was empty. Not a person around to spoil the view. The second time I logged on there were others, but they were all running later patches, so I couldn't join them in the digital skies. The third time I logged on,

SIGS started to automatically update my software. Aha, I thought, finally – third time's the charm, and all that. Except that SIGS updated me so far that I was now running a more advanced version of the game than everyone else, so I still couldn't join them. At which point I gave up. Wouldn't you have done?

Paint your wagon

A welcome little feature of *Red Baron II* is the ability to customise your own plane's paint job when you reach a high enough level. You can build a composite of other squadrons' colours and insignia or, using an external paint package, you can create your own designs. Try being the Mauve Baron, or importing the

same textures you use for your *Quake* skins. If you've reached the high-flying rank of Major, you can even design the colour scheme for your whole squadron, assigning different bizarre images to different pilots. And there's nothing they can do to stop you, you power-crazed buffoon.



(Left to right) Who says war doesn't pay? (No one - Ed.) Add a spot of entrepreneurial spirit and away you go. With the parts assembled, the finished plane takes to the skies in search of customers. Of course, you always have to be willing to deal with the competition accordingly.

flaw in any game that relies on low-level flying), and tanks and vehicles are simple box affairs with a crude texturing skin. In fact, when you're cruising at a few hundred feet looking for bogies, the terrain looks so pixelated that if anything dips below the horizon you end up losing sight of it in the graphical mire. Finding it again is akin to finding something in those Magic Eye pictures after six pints of Special Brew.

The only saving grace with regards to the graphics lies with the planes themselves. Bi-planes and tri-planes are things of beauty. There is a sense of elegance and majesty about them that modern aircraft can never hope to achieve, and *Red Baron II* really does a grand job of capturing their style and grace. Thankfully, this fact, combined with the beauty of the actual flight models, goes a some way towards redeeming the game.

Redeeming features

It's not often that we're forced to dwell so much on the physical appearance of a game, but in this case it simply cannot be ignored. In simplest terms, the better a flight sim looks, the more believable it will be and the more immersed you become. Putting this aside for now, it's important to note that the rest of the game, aside from one or two areas detailed elsewhere, is actually pretty well-constructed.

One of the most appealing features of the original *Red Baron* was the historical campaign structure, and thankfully this has remained intact. Developers Dynamix have put together a career-based campaign that has you enlisting in

the war at any point you like, and then sees you rise through the ranks as you embark upon a mixture of real and semi-real missions. Unlike in Rowan's *Flying Corps*, the war continues to progress around you according to historical happenings and everything certainly has a realistic feel to it, even if it is a visual mess.

Annoyingly, the video replay function found in the original *Red Baron* game has been sacrificed in the sequel. Although it wasn't integral to the game, it did enable you to save your entire mission, view the action from any angle or any cockpit, and cut and paste the action to create some spectacular 'films'. It was a nice little extra that presumably didn't take too much effort to include in the original, but it's sadly omitted here. The question is, why?

So farewell, then

But it's not all bad news. *Red Baron II* has its good points, it really does. There's, er... a damn good manual which is packed full of historical detail and tactical advice. The sound effects are brilliant and the music isn't bad at all. Surprisingly, there are also a good variety of missions, and as a result there's plenty of long-term scope thanks to being able to fly for any of the four main theatres in the war.

If you're inclined to be just a tad sentimental, you could almost forgive *Red Baron II* for being so poor. It tries hard in some areas, but unfortunately just falls flat on its face in so many others. Sadly, the holes are just too gaping, the flaws just too prominent to make it a worthwhile purchase. Pull back on the joystick, bank sharply and steer well clear. **Z**



The whole thing looks a bit dated, but then it was due out more than a year ago.



Plane detailing is high, but the terrain leaves a lot to be desired.

In Perspective

Flying Corps (Gold) is the best WWI sim currently available on the PC and is far better than *RBII*. *Air Warrior III* continues the historical theme (and includes a limited WWI side), but really only shines when you play it on-line. And, to complete the history lesson, *Sabre Ace* is far worse than *Red Baron II*.

Red Baron II

Flying Corps

Air Warrior III

Sabre Ace

Tech Specs

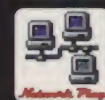
Memory: 16Mb (32Mb recomm'd)

Processor: P133 (P200 recomm'd)

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: Win-compatible sound card

Controls: Joystick, keyboard, mouse, flightstick



Score

Disappointingly flawed in several key areas.



Price: £34.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Sierra

Telephone: 0118 920 9111

Website: www.siera.com

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Starship Titanic



So is the adventure game really dead, as we said on page 112? Paul Presley thinks he may have found one that's still got some life in it.



B

BEWARE, ADVENTURE GAME, FOR I AM death incarnate. I am your greatest enemy and your most passionate lover. I am the slayer of mediocrity and the champion of the great. I am your most strident critic and I smell inferiority at a hundred paces. Be good or be dead; there is no middle ground.

I'll admit that I'd been looking forward to *Starship Titanic* for a long time. I'd followed its development from an early stage, partly because I'm something of a Douglas Adams fan, but mostly because, as a consumer of 'good' adventure games, I'd been looking for something of real quality for longer than I care to mention and this held the most promise. Am I, then, a happy bunny? I couldn't be happier if I'd just been voted Most Shaggable Rabbit by *Doe's Weekly*.

Death incarnate?

A few issues ago, *Zork: The Grand Inquisitor* gave hope to my blackened heart. Here, finally, was an adventure game that tried to take the essential elements of the classic text-adventure and reinvent them for the nineties. And mostly it worked. *Starship Titanic* does much the same thing, but thanks to a few bright innovations here and there it manages to take it one step further: we've got a storyline that is ever present but, vitally, never the sole focus of the action (à la oh so many interactive movies); locations that are rich in detail but are not tied down to the current swathe of on-screen action; characters that have a wealth of depth, but which you are left to discover for yourself (rather than foisted on you upfront); and, most importantly of all, puzzles that are very well-designed and perfectly integrated into the game.

That last point is important. Too many adventures of late have taken the route that goes: create the storyline, devise all

"An innovative piece of software filled with everything that is right about adventure games."

Your basic quest is to continually upgrade your room, from Super Galactic Traveller class (below) to Second Class (bottom), and, finally, to First Class status, with all the glamour that entails (left).



the characters and locations, then throw in the puzzles in a gratuitous fashion in an effort to make it seem more like a game than an interactive storybook. *Starship Titanic* isn't like this – it has puzzles that are born of the inherent storyline. They never feel as though they've been gratuitously added, but instead as though they are the most natural progression of your present situation – a sign of a quality writer at work.

Speaking of which, so is this much-heralded unique speech interface: when you meet a character, you type in what you want to say and they respond accordingly. That's 'type'. With your keyboard. In plain English. It takes a little getting used to, but you soon get into the swing of things, and the sense of freedom this affords you is immeasurable. Plus the characters are so well-written that talking to them rarely becomes a chore. The whole thing is designed as though conversation is a puzzle in itself – you need information from a character, and you have to work out what to say to get it from him.

Another nice touch is the fact that movement between scenes takes place as quick, blurred jumps, instead of painstakingly slow rendered sequences. Concerns have been expressed about the movement interface, the somewhat arbitrary nature of the directional arrows, but whether or not this bothers you comes down to personal taste. Personally I prefer it to the more annoying 360-degree interface seen in the *Zork* titles. So there.

Call yourself objective?

There are negative points to be made, but to be perfectly honest they're mostly so damned petty that if I actually told you what they were, I'd look bad, instead of the game. It doesn't really have many actual flaws. Instead you can see elements that, while being perfectly fine as they stand, could possibly be improved further. The unique dialogue system, for example, occasionally shows its limitations – although this is



(Top left) What doomed ship would be complete without a bomb onboard? But this one has a neurotic complex and doesn't really want to explode if at all possible. (Right) The Personal Electronic Thing (PET) is your main interface onboard and keeps track of conversations and room locations, and has a remote control facility with which to control the ship's functions.

perfectly understandable given what the developers are trying to do. At least it never breaks the atmosphere, and you still feel as though you can say and ask anything throughout (which indeed you can).

The next step for the developers is obviously some kind of advanced object interface. At present it's more or less like everyone else's: you pick up an object and your cursor becomes an iconic representation of it, which you use by clicking on other items. It works fine (and, thanks to the quality of the puzzles, you don't really notice its limitations), but it could probably be taken a step further, giving you just as much freedom with objects as the developers have given you with speech.

Justifications

As you've no doubt noticed by now (and the above points notwithstanding), *Starship Titanic* has got a score of 91 and,



consequently, a Classic rating. There are a few reasons for this. It creates an atmosphere that's totally absorbing, it's an adventure game that's actually made me sit down and think (something that previously hasn't happened for quite a while), it's genuinely funny (again, something that's been long-missing) and it has first-rate presentation (which, I'm discovering, is more important than I thought).

But mostly I've decided to award *Starship Titanic* a Classic rating because of one thing: simply that it's turned around to a moribund software industry and said: "You want to just sit there and chase each other's tails? Fine. We're going to do things our way."

And the result is a piece of software that not only shatters several long-held illusions about what's possible in this genre, but innovates and is filled with everything that's right about adventure gaming. Other developers take note: this is the shape of things to come. **Z**

Brief encounter

As an example of how the dialogue system works, here's a quick transcript of a conversation early on in the game with a rather fussy female robot. All my comments were typed in the game verbatim...

Deskbot: Good day. I am the deskbot, ready to do my best.

Me: It's about my room...

Deskbot: Haven't got time for that. Busy, busy, busy. Any problems with your room, bring them to me and I'll ignore them as soon as I can. Any other problems I'll ignore straight away.

Me: I don't like your attitude.

Deskbot: How useful for you. As if I could care.

Me: My room is too small.

Deskbot: It's very nice. It may be a little small but most everything very useful is bigger than nothing at all... which is

what you paid for it.

Me: I'd still like a bigger room though.

Deskbot: I seem to remember we've given you a free room already. Think yourself lucky.

Me: Can I get an upgrade?

Deskbot: And who's budget is that supposed to come out of?

Me: Yours.

Deskbot: I have no time for freeloaders.

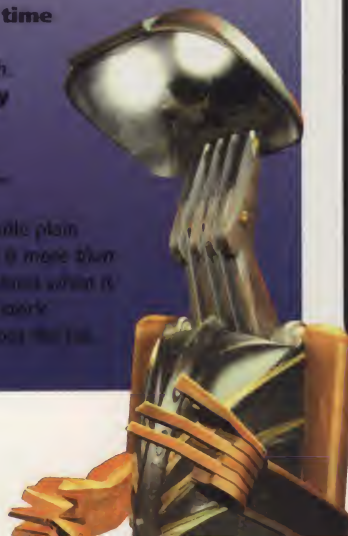
Me: Stuff you then, bitch.

Deskbot: Go and fry your face.

Me: Goodbye, my love.

Deskbot: Goodbye...

As you can see, it can handle plain English quite well (which is more than you can - eh). There are times when it gives back an obviously wrong answer, but generally it does the job.



In Perspective

Taken at face value, *Starship Titanic* could be seen as another of those 'pretty backdrop' games (à la *Riven*). But start playing it and you quickly realise it's far more than that. For one thing they've actually got a game in here. *Zork: The Grand Inquisitor* is similar in that it mirrors the early days of adventuring, whereas the exact opposite is something like *Blade Runner*, a game that tries to innovate but ultimately doesn't quite pull it off.

Starship Titanic

Zork: The Grand Inquisitor

Riven

Blade Runner

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P133

Graphics: Win 95 compatible

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse



Score

An example to us all.

91

Price: £44.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Zabla Entertainment

Telephone: 01626 332233

Website: www.starshiptitanic.com

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GRAND ★ ★ ★
THEFT
★ ★ ★ **AUTO** 18

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TAKE 2

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Interstate '76: Nitro Riders



Step forward **Richie Shoemaker** (Zone's own standalone expansion pack) – he's nominated himself as the retro '70s bass-plucking funkmaster. Let's just call him a plucking funk and leave it at that.



Here's the plain ol' non-3D accelerated version. It ain't pretty, but it's still groovy.

A

FTER WATCHING *TOP GEAR* THE OTHER night it's clear that the 'big car, small dick' theory still pervades with suburban road warriors; back in the '70s it was every American's duty to drive a car capacious enough to ferry the entire population of Lithuania.

Last year's *Interstate '76* was all about big cars. Based in an apocalyptic future – but in the '70s – you wore the driving shoes of Groove Champion, a flared crusader out to avenge the death of your sister Jade. Essentially a mission-based driving game, cars were heavily armed, hair was plain heavy, and car stereos pumped out the funkier music ever heard in a computer game. *Interstate '76* had style, it

was freakin' difficult, and on the average PC the graphics were jerkier than a teacup in an old dear's hand.

A game for Quentins

Set in a time previous to the original, *Nitro Riders* is more of the same, but this time round you get the chance to play as Jade (the sexy chick), Skeeter (who's a bit slow but good with spanners) or Taurus (who has big hair). Unlike last year's effort there are no 'scripted animated

sequences', just dialogue. It works very well, and even though you only get to see the characters in the new intro it doesn't detract from the Tarantino feel of the game.

The new missions can be completed in any order, so you can quite happily jump between characters and missions if things are getting a bit difficult, and come back to them later. The flip side of this is that the story lacks narrative.

But that's not to say you're not given an incentive to progress. After a few missions of blowing up 'creepers' and escorting trucks, there is some semblance of an overall plot.

Once you've completed the three main mission sets, you get to meet a new character who you can put through some extra missions. New terrains have also been incorporated, and fans of the multi-player game will find new vehicles and weapons, as well as capture the flag missions, deathmatches and races.

All right now

Nitro Riders thankfully builds on the graphical shortcomings of the original *Interstate '76* by adding all sorts of 3D support. Anyone who played the previous release with the Direct3D patch we gave away last issue will know what to expect; if you don't have a 3D card you probably won't notice that much of an improvement, and even if you do there are still some obvious problems: shadows don't hang together too well and mountains continue to spring up from the middle distance. It's annoying, but it doesn't really matter too much because the game oozes style from every pixelated pore. For 20 quid it's perfect throwaway fun that should appeal to anyone with a fond appreciation of *Starsky And Hutch*. **Z**

In Perspective

Comparing *Nitro Riders* to *Carmageddon* is a bit unfair, because the gameplay is more along the lines of *MechWarrior*. But it's a superb game – it's just a pity the graphics aren't as smooth as the gameplay.

Interstate '76: Nitro Riders

Carmageddon

Interstate '76

Interstate '76 (with D3D patch)

MechWarrior 2

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb (32Mb recommended)

Processor: P166 (minimum)

Graphics: 3D card for best results

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, wheel, joystick (force feedback also supported)

Note: Like the original, best enjoyed in 3D hardware mode or low-res



Score

Groovy, baby. Groovy



Price: £19.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Activision

Telephone: 01895 456 7000

Website: www.activision.com

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

(Below) Decent driving games should be played from an overhead perspective.
(Bottom) Cream that truck!

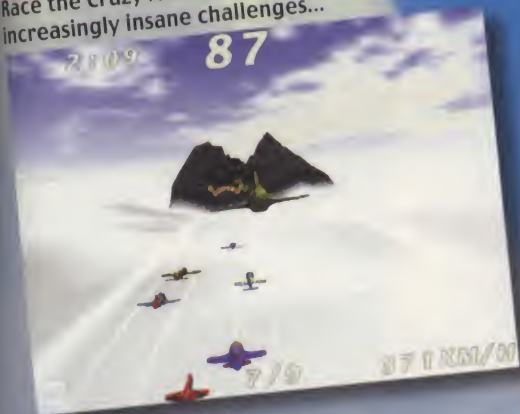


Plane Crazy is simple to pick up, but really hard to master - PC Zone

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Croc

Legend Of The Gobbos

Wearing the skin of dead animals is a sick thing to do. Slipping his feet into a pair of crocodile skin sneakers is

Paul Rose.

7

IT'S FUNNY HOW THE PC HAS NEVER really been a home to truly corking platform games. In the days of the MegaDrive and the Super NES, the average PC didn't have the guts to challenge the speedy parallax-scrolling, side-on likes of Mario and Sonic. It's only now, with magic graphics cards and 'really neat' Pentium processors and stuff that the PC can kick faces in the platform game arena. However, as we all know, the average contemporary platform game – nay, any game – will be laughed out of the shop if it isn't 'in' 3D.

Croc of gold

Depending on how you look at it, *Croc* is either a cartoony *Tomb Raider* or a rip-off of Nintendo's *Super Mario 64*. We favour the latter description, but given that the comical antics of Nintendo's arch mascot aren't readily available to the stalwart PC-o-phile, it barely matters. *Croc* has one of those typical platform game plots that absolutely no one is interested in. Still, for the sake of completeness, listen up...

The Gobbos are a race of little furry guys who discover the eponymous Croc as an infant and welcome him as one of their own. One day, all the Gobbos are kidnapped for no good reason by a bunch of truly bad 3D cartoon animals, and Croc, remembering the debt he owes his adoptive family, sets out to rescue them. Got it?

In Croc's world of prettily texture-mapped caverns, cliffs, valleys and icy tundras and that, the

True to form, unexpected puzzles and bonus games are littered throughout the game to help to keep your interest from waning too early.



It looks nice, but the many levels soon blur into one.

roving camera angle is king. It does a pretty good job of capturing the best view of the action as our scaly hero spins and jumps his way from bad-guy cranium to bad-guy cranium. But it's not all about jumping on snakes and rats; there's a good deal of exploring to do. The levels – numerous but short, and broken up by doors and tunnels rather than taking the approach of *Tomb Raider's* sprawling layouts – are full of hidden areas and secret rooms.

There are also unexpected puzzles and bonus games littered throughout the game, which will either offer up life-affirming gemstones, useful keys or missing Gobbos. However, as varied as it might be, *Croc's* many levels soon blur into one, and it's only the decor which really sets them apart from each other. There's only so many times you can leap from platform to platform over bubbling lava or death-threatening water without falling asleep.

Croc of shit?

Croc is a monstrosity big game, it plays well, looks nice (particularly with the obligatory 3D card), and has even some original ideas. However, it's no classic, possibly because so much of it attempts to emulate someone else's work. For a game that places so much on the appeal of a central character, it's a very characterless game. 7



In Perspective

It's the first true *Mario* clone to arrive on the PC, but sadly *Croc* doesn't quite cut it when you compare it to the likes of *Tomb Raider*. At the end of the day it is a decent enough cartoon character-driven 3D platform game, but *Croc* lacks the appeal of a genre icon. For a start, he hasn't got very big tits or a comedy 'tache. Play it for a few hours on your mate's PlayStation before you decide to buy.

Croc

Tomb Raider 2

Sonic & Knuckles

Lomax

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb min (32Mb recom'd)

Processor: P120 or faster

Graphics: 320x200 software to 800x600 accelerated 3D

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joystick



Score

Fun to pay for a while, but it's hardly original or innovative.

79

Price: £34.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: EA/Fox Interactive

Telephone: 01753 546 465

Website: www.ea.com

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

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Queen: The Eye

He's a killer queen, and he's dynamite with a laser beam – he's even guaranteed to blow your mind... ahhhhhhh! He is, of course, that fat-bottomed girl Paul Rose.

T

HE WORLDS OF MUSIC AND COMPUTER games have been inexorably linked since, well, since that Frankie Goes To Hollywood game came out on the ZX Spectrum 15-odd years ago. In the interim, the likes of Madness, Peter Gabriel and Iron Maiden have all danced naked and stoned in the crop circle of interactive entertainment. If Suggs and The Nutty Boys can do games, there's absolutely no reason why late, "great" stadium rock legends Queen can't...

Send a bolt of lightning

Queen: The Eye has allegedly been inspired by the work of Queen, and features music tracks taken from all eras of the band's career. Curiously, rather than being a game featuring Bicycle Races, Fat-Bottomed Girls, and clog-wearing ponies with giant haircuts, it's an *Ecstatica/Resident Evil*-style polygon beat 'em up-cum-puzzle-type game. And, of course, just to distance things further from the music and lyrics of Queen, it's set in a dark, decaying future where the economic collapse of society has left the world controlled by an insane, self-replicating bio-organic computer called The Eye.

Because it's the sort of thing that always happens in games, you control a lone rebel out to bring down The Eye and restore some semblance of normality to a world driven mad by constant replays of 'Hammer To Fall' and 'It's A Kind Of Magic' over the omnipresent public address system.

Do the fandango

The game begins proper with you fighting for your life within the deadly maze of a *Running Man*-style gameshow. However, what begins as a simple 3D beat 'em up becomes more adventure-y once you escape the confines of the maze. The surreal world of *The Eye* is populated by numerous



That's you in there somewhere. Not the most helpful of camera angles. Combat is also erratic and cumbersome.

strange characters, most of them with a circus or Far Eastern feel to them. You have to interact with these odd characters in a variety of ways while solving the usual 'use the brown key on the brown door'-type puzzles.

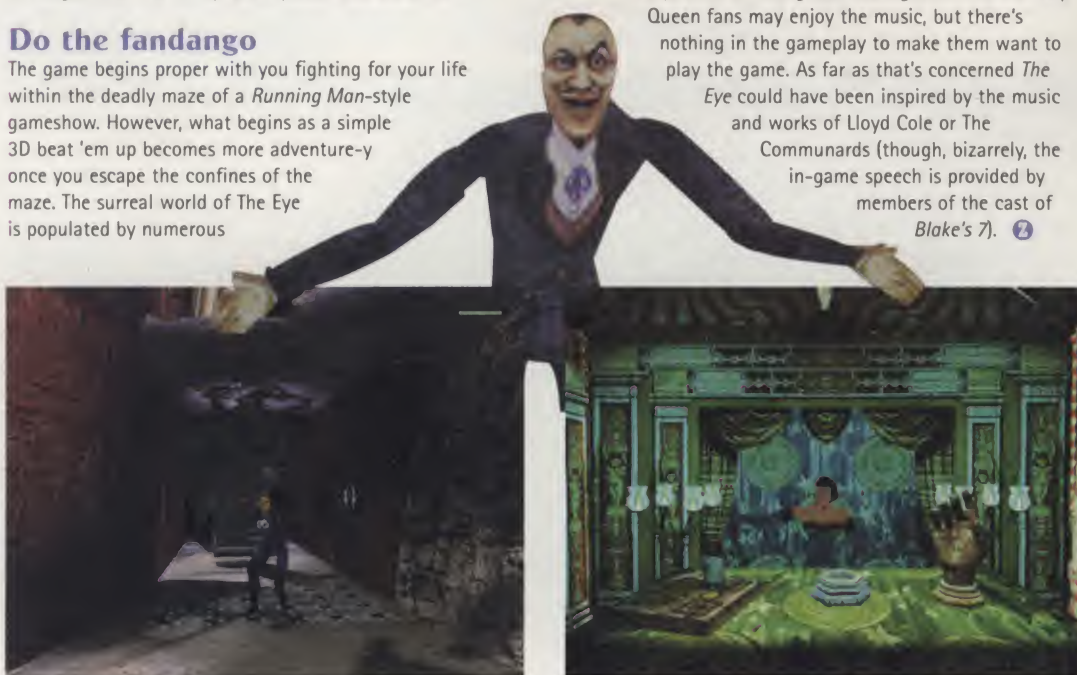
With the dark, pre-rendered backdrops, every one of which could have been taken from the video for Queen's 'Innuendo' video, there's no doubting that *Queen: The Eye* doesn't look like anything else. That isn't to say the game looks particularly pretty. The spindly polygon characters are far from attractive, and combat resembles little more than a fight between a couple of marionettes; the backdrops, while refreshing at first, don't take long to get annoying.

Gameplay is where the real flaws lurk, however. There's not much here that hasn't been done better before; and even the introduction of flame-throwers can't compensate for the fact that the fights you regularly get into are just plain annoying – enemies leap around you like deranged mudskippers, which makes lining up your attacks far from

easy, while irritating camera angles do little to help. Queen fans may enjoy the music, but there's nothing in the gameplay to make them want to play the game. As far as that's concerned *The*

Eye could have been inspired by the music and works of Lloyd Cole or The

Communards (though, bizarrely, the in-game speech is provided by members of the cast of *Blake's 7*). **B**



Another tunnel for you to explore, Freddie Mercury-style.

Yes, we stock giant plaster of Paris hands.

In Perspective

It's a genre that's been done to death. And even with a soundtrack provided by Mercury, May and co, there's no escaping the fact that this game is far from original and suffers from some severe gameplay flaws.

Queen: The Eye

Ecstatica 2

Resident Evil

Fighting Force

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb min (32Mb recommended)

Processor: P133 or faster

Graphics: 320x200 software to 800x600 accelerated 3D

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick

Note: Also supports modem-to-modem and eight-player network play



Score

Bohemian crapsody.

56

Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Telephone: 01753 549442

Website: www.ea.com

dan

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Review ZONE Extra!

This month we've squeezed in even more games in an effort to give you the complete guide to every new release – good and bad.

PC Zone Recommends



DARK REIGN EXPANSION – RISE OF THE SHADOWLAND



Activision has returned to the *Dark Reign* universe with this expansion pack, which expands on the typically tedious sci-fi plotline of the original game as an excuse for introducing 18 new missions and ten or so all-new units. It begins, in atypical fashion, with a spectacular all-CGI movie sequence. We've seen it all before, yes, but rarely do you get FMV clips of this quality in an add-on pack. Suffice to say the war depicted in the original game has progressed, with new combatants entering the fray – The Imperium Shadowhand and Freedom Guard Xenite, each brings a new sort of carnage to the battlefield.

Among the new units are the Shredders – infantry-killing discs of death – and the Rangers, who are seductively voiced female mercenaries. Also, providing you have units capable of doing so, the indigenous life on the various planets you'll visit is there to be enslaved and added to your ranks. Other additions to the gameplay enable you to construct roads and bridges, as well as ruining your opponent's day by turning the terrain surrounding his base into a swamp.

Fourteen of the 18 new missions are single-player only, while the remaining four are exclusively for multi-player games. Those who got a kick out of the single-player construction kit included with the full game will no doubt be beefed-up to hear that a multi-player level construction kit is available here.

It's cheap, it's cheerful, it adds relatively little to the existing game, but if you've exhausted *Dark Reign* then *Rise Of The Shadowhand* must surely be essential stuff.

Paul Rose

Publisher: Activision
Tel: 01895 456700
Price: £19.99

80



GREAT BATTLES OF CAESAR

This third title in the series, after *Alexander* and *Hannibal*, should prove as popular with hard-core 'ancients' players as with those with a more casual interest.

New features include fortifications and siege tactics, plus new, more interesting units like Caesarean and Pompeian cohorts, Numidian and Syrian archers, German barbaric cavalry and dozens more.



Owing to the Romans' superb command system, there are more flexible junior or section leaders that can be used to carry out an even wider variety of strategies. *Caesar* adds extensive fortifications, with some excellent siege scenarios as a result. Elevation now plays a part in combat, as well as in movement.

For the dyed-in-the-wool gamer there's a unique, initiative-based command system and some good opportunities for solo, head-to-head or co-operative play over the Internet or cables – but still no e-mail play.

One useful aspect is that you can play battles by controlling just a few troops. That way you watch and wait and choose your moment. The AI is good (if predictable), but it's the thrilling 3D graphics of each encounter that turn the game into something quite special.

The *Great Battles* series hasn't made giant leaps in terms of graphics – gameplay is still predictably slow at times – but it's enough to satisfy most serious war gamers with an obsession for the period. I can't recommend it as light entertainment, but if you persevere past the somewhat odd interface, you might be pleasantly surprised by what you find.

Andrew Wright

Publisher: Interactive Magic
Tel: 01344 409399
Price: £39.99

72



CLAW

From the makers of *Blood* comes... a cutesy platform game involving household pets. Not your common or garden, foul-smelling, furniture-destroying parasites though, but swashbuckling vagabonds of the high seas. Pirates. But somehow pirates in the form of cats and dogs.

Unashamedly old-school, *Claw* has no pretensions whatsoever and is simply a full-on side-on platform game. It kicks off with a cartoon-quality introduction though, in which feline felon Captain Nathaniel J Claw is brought to justice by some law dogs. Banged up in the slammer and facing a swift beheading, he finds a piece of an old map left by a previous tenant. Intent on completing the map in order to discover the whereabouts of the amulet of nine lives – why do they bother? – he makes good his escape and transforms into a 2D character in a computer game.



From here on in it's pretty much a case of as you were. There is definitely a social stigma attached to platform games, and there is very little dignity to be had in playing them. But with the curtains closed, *Claw* immediately reminds you what made them the phenomenon they once were, its simple but effective style soon inducing a Pavlovian cycle of frustration and elation interspersed (naturally) with foul and abusive language.

Jumping, climbing, shooting, fighting and throwing stuff is largely what it boils down to, with some nice touches such as dynamite and exploding barrels. The 14 levels provide a fairly hefty challenge, and they are interspersed with some watchable cut scenes that relay the unlikely story. Best of all, you get to kill dogs.

Steve Hill

Publisher: IONA Software
Tel: 0181 296 9454
Price: £19.99

73



DEADLOCK II: SHRINE WARS

There's something indefinably comforting about *Deadlock 2*. It's the sort of game where you want to take the phone off the hook, slip into one of those big slipper things and settle down to casually conquer the world. Of course, to get this intimate means putting in the hours – a couple to get used to the controls, half an hour to get over the graphics, and ten to win your first battle.

Before you actually get to the combat, you have to choose one of the sides, which range from the obligatory insectoid nasty types to the vanilla-flavoured, bog-standard humans. If you're playing a random or multi-player map you then have to choose a drop site for your first colony, then it's the gradual build-up of resources, facilities and armies.

The feel of *Deadlock 2* is not unlike a board game – albeit a pretty complicated one. Each map is split into geographical regions, subdivided into grids where you place various buildings. Colonists have to be shuffled about to staff the facilities. The more you have, the quicker you can build. And it's here you'll spend most of your time, managing established settlements and forging new ones. Combat units never really make an appearance until



you're actually attacking or defending a particular settlement. Units sit in a stack, assigned to a region, and when you send them into battle they warble and screech a lot.

Deadlock 2 is certainly an improvement over the first title, though nothing spectacular. Eye candy this certainly ain't, but while there's nothing new or innovative there sure is a lot of depth.

Richie Shoemaker



SKI RACING

With the Winter Olympics now but a distant insomniac memory, Sierra Sports see fit to recreate those heady nights with the functionally named *Ski Racing*, featuring none other than US World Champion skier Picabo Street. Not exactly a household name, but as a hastily added sticker on the box boasts, Ms Street actually lifted herself a gold medal at the recent Nagano shindig. Ruddy of cheek and wide of smile, she appears in the game via the magic of



video, presenting a rudimentary tutorial on the basics of skiing. Essentially, she suggests skiing faster in order to gain quicker times, which is probably a good bit of advice.

Ski Racing features four different events, namely Slalom, Giant Slalom, Downhill and Super G, each involving hurtling down a frozen mountain on a pair of planks with your arse in the air. The events (which can be combined to form a championship season), all requiring the negotiation of some kind of gate, are largely indistinguishable. The locations, which encompass Val d'Isère, Garmisch, Whistler, Aspen Mountain, Vail and Mount Bachelor, look exactly the same.

The skiing itself also fails to totally convince, and claims of a minimum spec of P90 are ludicrous, with the game jerking like a scout camp. The gameplay is also somewhat flawed, as missing just one gate results in automatic disqualification. Whether it's realistic or not, traversing half a mountain only to fail at the last hurdle is a bit of a kick in the teeth, and surely some kind of time penalty would have been a better idea. The motion never feels quite right either, and none of the four camera views are ideal. Not very good, then.

Steve Hill



STRATAJAMS

A collection of strategy puzzle games for punters aged 14 to adult. Not exactly pushing back the boundaries of interactive entertainment, *Stratajams* will run on a 386, although there's nothing here that would have stretched a Spectrum.

Sliding tile puzzles and car park quandaries are not the stuff of fantasy, and anyone found playing this must be very bored indeed. They even have the cheek to lie, claiming 350 puzzles "to keep your brain jamming". There are actually six separate puzzles, each with numerous tiresome variations, none of which even come close to *Minesweeper*, which is free with Windows 95. You'd be a fool to buy this. It's not even worth stealing.

Steve Hill

Publisher: Smart Games
Tel: No UK contact available
Price: £19.99

17



POD GOLD

Pod Gold gives you all the original tracks that appeared in the first version of the game, plus all the extra ones that have been put up on Ubisoft's *Pod*-dedicated site, giving you 32 tracks in all. In addition, you also get all the extra cars and the huge range of options – customising the handling of the cars, race modes – so it's a pretty comprehensive race game, with loads to do. And it is only 30 quid.

But the graphics are far from mind-blowing nowadays; you don't really get a sense of high speed during races; and the cars always felt a bit floaty, so the handling was never worth getting excited about. Basically, it just feels a bit old, tired and superseded now. Get *Screamer Rally* instead.

Patrick McCarthy

Publisher: Ubi Soft
Tel: 0181 944 9000
Price: £29.99

78



SIM SAFARI

Maxis have made their name from one game and one game only: *Sim City*. Before and since, every other game has just been a pale imitation. Variations have covered everything from the minuscule world of ants to the macroscopic proportions of Earth itself. And while a few *Sim* games have been worthy additions, there have been a fair few stinkers. *Sim Safari* is unfortunately one of them. Of course, all this can be forgiven because it's a kids game. Children deserve nothing less than a patronising lesson in conservation before being made to eat their greens.

Thoroughly modern parents may buy this for their bleeders, but don't expect any thanks. Let them eat duplo instead.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: Maxis/EA
Tel: 01753 549442
Price: £39.99

20



SEMPER F1

If ever there was a throwback to the DOS-based war games of the 1980s, this is it. It runs only in 640 x 480 mode and it makes *Panzer General's* graphics look highly advanced.

The main strength of *Semper* is that it throws the turn-based rulebook out the window. Units get to move based on their initiative, making it possible for good, well-led units to achieve heroic feats of arms. Add opportunity fire, suppression and leadership factors, and you've got a system that could alter the face of war gaming for ever. But there are only 15 scenarios and three campaigns, and no way to generate random conflicts.

In short, *Semper F1* is a game strictly for hex-heads.

Andrew Wright

Publisher: Interactive Magic
Tel: 01344 409399
Price: £39.99

53

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Telephone: 01753 549442
Price: £39.99

75

Publisher: Cendant
Tel: 0118 920 9100
Price: £29.99

56

THE FIRST MECHWARRIOR

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old bus ticket? Cue coconut shell sound effects as **Richie Shoemaker** and **Kristian Reed** ride to the rescue with a handful of games that you could afford just by busking in the station for half an hour.

PC Zone Classic



TOTAL HEAVEN

All three of the strategy games included on this compilation are past Zone Classics. First up is *Civilization II*. Created by the critically acclaimed Sid Meier, it's an epoch-spanning turn-based affair where, as leader of a small tribe of people, you must research, conquer and manage your way through to the 21st century. New hi-res graphics, sound and a smooth, spanking interface, combine to make it a game that everyone should own.

If town planning is more your thing, perhaps *Sim City 2000*, another sequel, is for you. The idea is to build up a newly settled town into a throbbing metropolis. From developing the infrastructure to setting tax rates and demarking business districts, there's plenty to keep every wannabe town councillor busy. The only problem is that it's almost four years old and none of the add-ons have been included.

The third game, *Settlers 2*, is not too distant from Microsoft's recent *Age Of Empires*. It's a real-time strategy game based firmly in the Bronze Age, and more empire building is the order of the day. Though it focuses mainly on development rather than combat, the 'free' game enables you to customise the number of enemies, and so bring on a bloodbath far more swiftly than you could hope for even in *AOE*.

Each game offers a different set of challenges, and with each of them awaiting a sequel you'd be wise to cram in a few hours of gaming history – whether you're a fan of the strategy genre or not.

Publisher: Europress
Tel: 01625 855000
Price: £39.99

91



LINKS LS

Golf-hating individuals are in for a surprise – they could find themselves actually liking a game like *Links LS*. Even without thumbing through the manual, it's easy enough to just thwack your way around the courses, pretending you know what you're doing. But then you notice things like foot-placing, and realise that the angle of the club might actually affect where the ball ends up; you start thinking, 'Hang on, I'll look that up in the comprehensive manual which came free with the



game. Thank you, Eidos. Thank you! Before long you're getting into the physics of the thing, and not only is it dark outside, but you've also grown a beard and the Millennium Dome has crumbled to dust.

It's your pretty typical 'hit small ball into small hole' stuff, incorporating the usual plethora of digital golfing paraphernalia. You've got your gratuitous fly-bys, FMV-captured golfers in pastel-coloured sweaters, and banal voiceovers from an American star commentator – who's probably famous only to golfing aficionados and the Sky Sports Couch Potato Club.

What is so unique to *Links LS* is the attention to detail and the wealth of options. Before wheeling your clubs around the Kapalua or Latrobe courses, you can take a virtual tour around them or even swot up on Arnold Palmer's aviation history. If all this 'multimeeja' stuff excites you, then consider it a bonus; everyone else would be advised to avoid it. But in no way use this as a stick with which to beat the game, because it's a most impressive example of how to produce a golfing sim that should appeal to almost everybody.

Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Tel: 0181 636 3000
Reviewed: Issue 43
Price: £12.99

90



TOMB RAIDER: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Tomb Raider blew everyone away when it was released in late '96 with its groundbreaking 3D visuals and combined elements of adventure, platform and action gaming. On top of this, the mass of labyrinthine levels took an age to complete. So after spending last Christmas guiding Ms Croft through the superb sequel, it was slightly odd going back to where it all began – and initial impressions were not good. Without the included 3D patch, the graphics are comparatively horrendous – even on a P2-233 it's a jerkathon in hi-res mode. Despite the readme file stating that there are patch drivers for ATI and Trident cards, further inspection reveals an empty directory – great! However, with a 3D card Lara runs, leaps, swims and shoots as smoothly as you could wish for. It's a credit to the programmers that the graphics impress as much today as they did 18 months ago.

Gameplay wise, *Tomb Raider* is as



keyboard-smashingly infuriating and smugly satisfying as ever, and the will to progress once you get into the game is irresistible. For those who have *TRII* but not the original, *Unfinished Business* will prove to be money well spent, as not only will you already have a feel for the game, you'll also have mastered the tricky controls (make sure you have a programmable joypad). Gushing praise aside, the body count in the original is seriously lacking, with a lot of running around empty levels, and the auto aim facility still gets on your tits as much as we'd like to get on hers. Still, it's *Tomb Raider*, and with four extra levels and a Lara Croft desktop calendar, it's excellent value.

Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Tel: 0181 636 3000
Reviewed: Issue 45
Price: £14.99

90



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2: 96/97



CM2 has been top of the PC Zone footie sim league for years. It's the sort of game that even those only mildly interested in football will learn to love and appreciate. It's nothing special to look at, and the commentary hardly adds to the experience, but as far as stats, tactics and the interface go, it's the best management sim by a long shot. In case you were holding back for the 97/98 enhanced version, take comfort in the fact that you can update all the players' stats with up-to-date info from this month's cover disc. Look in the /patches directory, extract the relevant file, and you'll soon have Gazza crying a river for Middlesbrough.

Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Tel: 0181 636 3000
Reviewed: Issue 31
Price: £12.99

94



F-14 FLEET DEFENDER

F-14 Fleet Defender couldn't be described as one of MicroProse's better flight sims, for the simple reason that the game is largely played out over great expanses of salty wetness. Unless you're a sailor or you find the maritime setting appealing, we suggest you give this creaking title a wide berth. The problems inherent with landing a speeding jet on a postage stamp will probably send most people insane, and the dated, 386-friendly graphics aren't going to impress anybody. Additionally, the options screens are all over the place. And while the game mechanics are sound enough, there are far better flight sims out there that require only the minimum of extra investment.

Publisher: Sold Out
Tel: 0171 721 8767
Reviewed: Issue 15
Price: £4.99

58



SENSIBLE GOLF

Some games shouldn't have made it past the ideas stage, and *Sensi Golf* is one of them. In trying to capture the playability of their Soccer and Cannon Fodder games, John Hare and the boys have created a fast-paced and simple top-down game that is devoid of almost every aspect that makes most golfing games at least halfway decent. The graphics are dreadful unless you play the game in a window, and the lack of any decent customisable options makes it pretty uneventful for the single player. There are 25 courses on offer, and up to 72 people can carve out divots at the same time, but *Sensible Golf* should only really be played after an uneventful weekday night, in a truly awful pub.

Publisher: Sold Out
Tel: 0171 721 8767
Not previously reviewed
Price: £4.99

36



FIELDS OF GLORY

Way back in issue 6 we gave this Napoleonic wargame 89 per cent, citing that "only its speed prevents it from being a classic". Here we are in 1998, running it on a Pentium 2 PC... and it still runs like a tortoise on jellies. Maybe we've been spoiled by the likes of C&C: Red Alert and Total Annihilation, but even by '93 standards (eg *Dune 2*) the graphics are ropey. And animation? Even on the fastest setting the units look like they're having a seizure when they move, and seem to take an age to reach their destination. If you're prepared to forgive its technical limitations and fancy recreating historical campaigns, then for five quid it's not much of a risk.

Publisher: Sold Out
Tel: 0171 721 8767
Reviewed: Issue 6
Price: £4.99

50



DUKE NUKEM 3D



Essentially this is last year's budget release in a new box, complete with a hefty piece of cardboard to make it feel like you're getting value for money (which, in all honesty, you are).

Yes, *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Quake* are the 3D shoot 'em ups to own on budget, and yes *Duke* is a brilliant game that beats id's seminal classic hands down in many areas. But why oh why couldn't we have the Atomic edition that includes the excellent *Plutonium Pack* mission disc? If you buy *Tomb Raider* you get new stuff, so why isn't this the case with *Duke*? Never mind - if you haven't already got a copy, you know what to do.

Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Tel: 0181 636 3000
Reviewed: Issue 40
Price: £12.99

83



SUBWAR 2050

Subwar 2050 is in many ways still the best futuristic submarine sim (if you discount Ubi Soft's beautiful but hollow *Sub Culture*). *Subwar* plays a lot like a flight sim of old in that essentially it's mission-based and very linear. There are four different subs to pilot and seven different campaigns based all over the world, and like all games set under the waves, it's very atmospheric. The typical underwater pings and whelps are in place, as well as some great lighting effects (by budget standards). If you fancy something a bit different from the norm, try it out. But be warned: some of the missions are pretty tough and it can get very heavy going at times.

Publisher: Sold Out
Tel: 0171 721 8767
Reviewed: Issue 11
Price: £4.99

75



HAND OF FATE

In the best of the *Kyrandia* trilogy, your mission is to guide the babelicious mystic Zanthia (1994's *Lara*?) around the Kyrandian islands, solving tasks with a slightly unorthodox spell-making method. Westwood point-and-click adventures have always had a certain charm, but have never quite reached the LucasArts benchmark. The interface is still pleasantly intuitive, but time has been cruel: the block-o-vision circa 1990 VGA graphics, the weedy 8-bit sound and clumsy animation mask what is actually a pretty solid game. However, with better alternatives available for only a few quid extra, this is one for enthusiasts of the point-and-click adventure genre only.

Publisher: Sold Out
Tel: 0171 721 8767
Reviewed: Issue 16
Price: £4.99

60



3D PETS

At long last the Tamagotchi craze is thankfully dying a slow death, but unfortunately thanks to this series of cheapo PC cyberpets it looks like they may end up outstaying their already strained welcome. There are various pets to choose from, two of which - *PC Pup* and *Koi Koi* - we had the displeasure of cybersitting. The problem with PC pets, aside from their life-sapping nature, is that the graphics are actually pretty good. In any other game this would normally be a selling point, but seeing Fido dribble nicotine yellow all over the kitchen floor lends little to his canine charm. In our book anyone who pisses on your desktop deserves all they get.

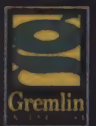
Publisher: Neechez
Tel: 01480 386083
Not previously reviewed
Price: £4.99 each

25



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PS
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ROM



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Death of a

Quality adventure games are in danger of extinction. **Chris Anderson** and **Paul Presley** search in vain for signs of life.

ALL ADVENTURE GAMES ARE CRAP. A RATHER SWEEPING STATEMENT PERHAPS, but allow us to explain. Most of today's adventures are, generally speaking, technically inferior to their ancestors of just a decade ago. They certainly can't hold a candle to their elder brethren when it comes to the true elements of adventure gameplay – storytelling and puzzle content. In this modern era of 20-second commercial slots, breakneck television sketch shows and instant gratification Nutri-Grain breakfast bars, you'll be lucky to find a game that lasts longer than a week at most.

So what's gone wrong? If you speak to many adventure game fans and even the developers themselves they'll probably point the finger at the so-called 'interactive movie'. The advent of CD-ROM not only gave birth to half-hour long rendered intros, but also encouraged the boffins to develop FMV compression techniques. This, along with leaps in Blue-screen technology and a rising belief that games could be made with the same production values as movies signalled more than a few nails in the coffin of the traditional adventure. Psuedo movie people masquerading as game developers, fees of the 'star' performers and increasingly high production costs meant that many publishers became so worried the player wouldn't see every frame of their digital *magnum opus* that they removed any semblance of challenge from the game. Consequently, although continually appeased with fancy eye candy, you became less involved with the proceedings, often being relegated to little more than a passive audience member, occasionally getting to play a game of *Tic-Tac-Toe* or *Simon Says*.

Because this sorry state of affairs continued unabated for several years (and because constant progressions in graphics technology allowed ever superior video techniques), players eventually became lulled into such a sense of superiority, confident they'd be able to complete any adventure that came along, that they reluctantly gave up on the genre and moved off to pastures *Quake* in search of a new challenge. The final blow was undoubtedly *Myst*, a game for which 'interaction' meant little more than 'turn the page'. If ever anything with a modicum of intelligence popped up, something that actually dared to challenge the player, he would run away screaming "This game's too hard!"

As a result, the quality and quantity of adventure games spiralled. The games kept getting easier (and consequently worse), the audience continued to diminish, the designers made games even



Zork Nemesis:
Damien Hirst
woz 'ere!

There are basically four types of modern adventure game...



... the heavily-rendered interactive movie, such as *Ripper*...



... the heavily-rendered classic adventure, such as *Zork: TGI*...

genre



In
loving memory
of
THE
ADVENTURE
GAME
died April 1998
aged 18 years
Gone but not
forgotten



... the animated interactive movie, such as *Discworld 2*...



... and the FMV-based interactive movie, such as *Phantasmagoria*.

Death by mis-adventure

Infocom are dead. Long live Infocom.

THE TEXT ADVENTURE GAME ISN'T dead. It's alive and well and thriving on the Internet, kept alive by an ever-growing community of gamers who know that fancy graphics, no matter how well rendered, can never replace the need for good storytelling combined with quality puzzles.

The key to the community is the availability of several freely available text adventure authoring programs, the most popular of which is Inform, the engine used to create the classic Infocom games of old. Anyone with a modicum of interest can turn out a text adventure, get the feedback and advice of fellow enthusiasts on one of the two newsgroups devoted to the subject, or just play the hundreds of games already produced. "Several of the adventures on the Interactive Fiction archive have been downloaded almost 10,000 times – very respectable for games that have no pictures, no sound and have never been advertised," says Gerry Wilson, a prominent IF author and, until recently, organiser of the annual IF authoring contest.

The origins of this amateur movement undoubtedly lie in the proliferation of adventure game construction kits back in the late '80s. Products such as The Professional Adventure Writer, the Graphic Adventure Creator and The Quill helped inspire thousands of bedroom programmers to put together

"Today's computer gaming crowd are usually too addicted to eye candy to give text a second look."

their own attempts at Interactive Fiction. The only difference between then and now is that the software used today is far more professional and the Net provides a large amount of support and encouragement.

Sadly, no matter how well-written these games are, they're struggling to make a home in today's market. The solution seems to be to head in the opposite direction and pitch them towards a different audience. "If text adventures were ever to go commercial again, it would have to be as inexpensive, literate games sold through major book stores," suggests Wilson. "Today's computer gaming crowd are usually too addicted to eye candy to give text a second look," Stephen Griffiths, another author, agrees. "If IF were marketed as a book-reading substitute – sold in the paperback section of a department store rather than the games section – it might reach people for whom it had more appeal."

Text adventures have something to offer everyone. To today's designers they show just what elements are needed in a good adventure game. For publishers, there's a potential new market waiting for them if only they have the balls to take a risk. And for the gamers?

There's a world of quality adventures with quality writing, and all free of charge.

◀ easier and added more graphical frills in order to woo them back. The players then got even more frustrated with having nothing to do, and so action games became the genre of choice for your average discerning PC games player.

A time of old

It was never thus in the old days. There was a time when the industry wasn't trying to be a mini-Hollywood clone, populated by shallow cretins largely drafted in from the movie industry who wouldn't know good game design if it came up behind them wearing a large 'Good Game Design Here! T-shirt and started beating them to death with a large 'How To Design A Good Game' manual. Back then, adventure games were designed by people who had a passion for the genre; people who had real talent for creating engrossing storylines and challenging games; people who cared about delivering an addictive game.

You'd have games like *Countdown*, from Access, a game in which you could be stuck in a single room, puzzling over the order of a stack of bottles, for over a week and not get frustrated with anything other than your own lack of wisdom. You'd keep coming back because the game was such a joy to play that you didn't mind getting stuck, and the feeling of joy when you finally completed the puzzle was all the more sweet for it.

Such was their strength that the games of old could inspire other emotions too: being reduced to tears of laughter by the sword-fighting routine in *Monkey Island*; the chill of fear creeping up your spine as you read the words, "You hear footsteps somewhere behind you..." while playing *Moonmist* in the early hours in a deathly silent, darkened room. Classic adventure games were a total immersion package. You didn't need fancy graphics or big-name actors – all you required was a good storyteller and a challenging game and you were hooked from start to finish.

Dedicated websites, such as this weekly newsletter, are keeping the text-only adventure alive.



XZZZY news

Tales from the Code Front:

So you want to write a text adventuring authoring system...

by Alan Conway

Many a programmer who has played Adventure, or any of the Infocom games has considered writing their own adventure game; some even consider writing an authoring system. In this article, author Alan Conway (alan@access.com) discusses how he developed an adventure authoring system named Adventure Builder and the issues involved with writing your own.

The genesis of Adventure Builder

When I was in high school, I played nearly every game on the HP 2000 system that users at my school and others in the area could dial into. I wrote a couple simple games of my own – battleship, card games, and the like. In the summer of 1978, just after I had graduated, a former teacher of mine began managing the district's new main computer. The three high schools in our district now had their very own DEC PDP-11/70 running RSTS/E. I spent some time at the computer center as a guest, playing with the computer while they worked the bugs out of the new system.

That summer I was introduced to Adventure, an early port of the original that had me instantly hooked. Imagine! A computer game which understood typed

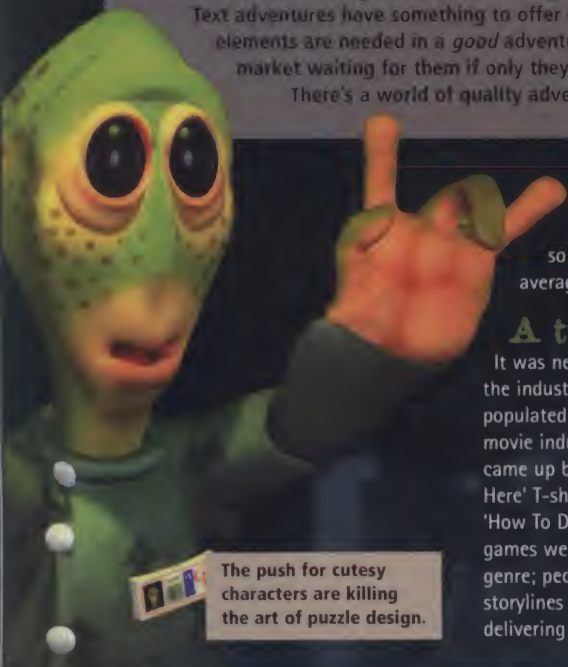
Suggested links

NEWSGROUPS:

rec.games.int-fiction (for the gamers);
rec.arts.int-fiction (for the authors)

WEBSITES:

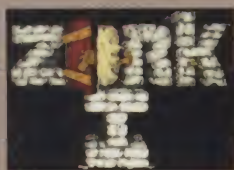
XZZZY News (an IF news site)
www.xzzzynews.com/
The Mining Company (another news site) –
<http://interactfiction.miningco.com/>
The Inform Compiler homepage
www.gnelson.demon.co.uk/inform.html
The IF archive (home for everything IF related) [ftp://ftp.gmd.de/if-archive/writing](http://ftp.gmd.de/if-archive/writing)



The push for cutesy characters are killing the art of puzzle design.

Zork (1980)

The granddaddy of them all. Well, okay, Adventure was the granddaddy, but Zork was the first to achieve mass appeal. If it wasn't for Zork, adventure games probably wouldn't exist. No graphics, just splendidly creative writing to conjure up landscapes and images. Zork spawned more sequels than the Police Academy movie.



The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy (1984)

Infocom games were always a joy, but HGTTG took them to new levels. Not only was it written by a best-selling author, but the beauty of its puzzle designs set it apart from anything else. The Babel Fish puzzle is still one of the most intricate, fiendish and well-thought out problems even today.



King's Quest (1984)

Still one of the finest adventures ever made, and responsible for shaping the adventure genre as we know it today. King's Quest is a charming tale told in Roberta Williams' own delightful style. Its most notable feature was the use of moving graphics on screen, the forerunner to every point-and-clicker available.



Been there, done that, sold the T-shirt

PC Zone gets opinions on adventure games from two industry insiders.



Louis Castle – Westwood Studios Vice President

PCZ: What were you hoping to achieve with *Blade Runner* the adventure game?

LC: To make a true detective story. We set out to design a new type of adventure game that is unique each time you play. We turned to simulation design to create a 'real-time 3D adventure'. The mechanics are similar to an adventure game (point and click) with the context-sensitive mouse like *C&C*, and a camera that can move to follow dramatic action. It's a true simulator, where almost anything within the context of the world can happen, instead of a linear story.

PCZ: Does this mean you feel that the 'traditional' adventure game is a thing of the past?

LC: Well, we didn't set out to redefine the adventure game, we set out to bring *Blade Runner* to life any way we could. I don't feel that would have

been possible with a traditional model. The detective work and sense of tension would have been difficult, if not impossible, to create. Our approach is not applicable to all stories.

PCZ: What advice would you give to someone planning to produce a new adventure game?

LC: Plan to make a great game, whatever the genre is. Focus on why the game is fun and keep it accessible. Define your audience and make a game they'll enjoy.

On the production side, try to visualise every part of the product and identify any technology issues that need to be resolved in advance. Once the scope of the product is determined, create a schedule and then work diligently on the production phase to get the title finished on time and on budget. Throughout the process, continue to second-guess your presumptions and test your ideas. Good design is an iterative process despite massive effort to plan it all in advance.

Douglas Adams – The Digital Village Co-founder, author

PCZ: What makes for a really good adventure?

DA: A sense of real involvement.

PCZ: How have the processes of designing an adventure changed between your time on *Hitchhiker's* and now?

DA: It's a whole different scale. When I worked on the *Hitchhiker* game it was just me and Steve Meretzky. And even that was twice as many as usual – most games were written by one person. *Starship Titanic*, on the other hand, has involved dozens of people. It's a highly collaborative medium.

PCZ: Can adventure games become mature or intelligent enough to be created as more than just 'interactive cartoons' by the mass market?

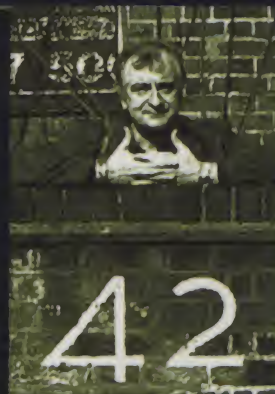
DA: I certainly think that it could happen, but whether it actually will or not I'm not sure. At the beginning of the sixties, pop music was just dance tunes for kids. Then along came Lennon & McCartney, Bob Dylan etc, who showed that the medium was capable of much more. I'd certainly be happy to see the same transformation occur to the games industry.

PCZ: What have you achieved with *Starship Titanic* that's missing from other games?

DA: Real involvement with the characters. It seems to me that the Infocom games, in which the player was engaged in a virtual conversation with the machine, were more compelling than modern point-and-click games, so I very deliberately said 'let's bring back the parser and use it to drive character interaction'.

PCZ: What sort of advances do you see happening over the next few years for the adventure game?

DA: I'd like to drive language interaction even further. I'd also be interested in seeing if the two opposite extremes of high rendering quality and fully navigable environments eventually meet in the middle. It will require machines far more powerful than we have at present though.



Paul's Excellent Adventure

The world according to Prezzer.

"Interactive Fiction is a narrative at war with a crossword," writes Graham Nelson,



author of Inform, the freely available IF scripting tool (see 'Death by mis-adventure' panel). If ever there was a motto for the adventure game genre, this should be it. Too many of today's games are concerned solely with how they look instead of how they play. Designers don't seem to give any thought to challenging the player or telling a decent story. In fact, many programmers are scared of making their games too difficult, lest you get bored and run away.

What I want to see is a game that gives you a decent sense of freedom in its world while still retaining an entertaining narrative and really good puzzle design. And don't tell me it isn't possible. The classic Infocom games contained all these elements and didn't have any graphics to worry about. Modern adventure designers need to throw away the rules and go back to the beginning, recapture the essence of those old text adventures first, then dress them up in '90s clothing. Then, maybe, we'll be back on track.

The Pawn (1985)

Magnetic Scrolls' (Britain's answer to Infocom) *The Pawn* was the first to prove that you could mix the sheer sense of freedom offered by text-input adventures with stunning (for the time) visuals and not harm either. *The Pawn*'s real asset was a powerful input parser that could cope with multiple commands at once.



Mean Streets (1988)

The first adventure game to use digitised imagery, *Mean Streets* is considered by many to be a timeless classic. Fiendish puzzles, totally absorbing character interaction (another first for the adventure genre) and a fantastic plot raise this game head and shoulders above its peers.



Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade (1989)

Setting new standards for film licences (prior to this they'd been bland platform games), with *Indy* LucasArts produced one of their most enjoyable adventure games outside of *Monkey Island*. Not only did it expand on the original film, but it was also one of the first to employ multi-character puzzles.



Been there, done that, sold the T-shirt

Opinions on adventure games from two more industry insiders.

Tim Schafer – LucasArts Project Director

PCZ: What, in your view, makes for a really good adventure?

TS: A real feeling of human presence in the design. You need to anticipate as many of the player's actions as possible. When they try the 'wrong' approach to a puzzle, you have to acknowledge them, either with an animation or a line of dialogue that says, "Nice try. Now try something else." You can't let them feel like they're alone.

PCZ: Have your design processes changed during your years in the business?

TS: The biggest change is the amount of design we do on the run. We used to only half-design the game, then plunge full-on into production, making up the second half as we went. Since games are more expensive now, we have to do far more designing upfront. It's harder, but the designs end up tighter.

PCZ: Is it possible for modern adventures to recapture the same level of interaction seen during the days of Infocom et al?

TS: No. In a text adventure you can add anything without affecting the budget. You can have armies of locusts at the cost of one sentence. In a graphic environment, each item has a cost. Sure it would be cool to have the locusts, but would it add enough to the game to justify the cost? However, when you're forced to only add things that you're really sure are worth the money, you end up with a game full of truly killer stuff.

PCZ: Where is the adventure game heading in the next few years?

TS: A lot of hard-core adventurers don't want to hear this, but *Mario 64* changed everything. People who buy adventure games have always begrudgingly put up with clunky graphics, obtuse interfaces and lethargic pacing in adventures because they get certain pleasures out of these games that they can't get elsewhere. But then along came *Mario* and *Tomb Raider* and suddenly you can make a game that satisfies the adventure game lover, is easy to play, great to look at and paced like an action film. Any adventure game designers who discount the impact of these games are already out of business – they just don't know it.



Ever since graphics were introduced to adventures, they've progressed from crude basic imagery to hand-drawn animation to full-on renders of near movie quality.

How quickly they forget

Modern adventure games have lost their focus. These days it's all graphics, graphics, graphics. Developers pitch the advances in their presentations, the improvements in their visuals, rather than the depth and quality of their stories (usually because they don't contain much of either). Press releases and product demos concentrate on how cutting-edge their lighting effects and anti-aliasing routines are. Trade shows are filled with B-list actors grateful for the chance to escape daytime game show hell and earn a crust.

And then they're surprised that their products no longer sell. No matter how advanced your light sourcing may be in an adventure game, it cannot compete with the genres that truly rely on graphical innovation – *Quake* and *Tomb Raider* will always outstrip classic adventure-style games in terms of sales if the latter continue to focus on the wrong areas. Unfortunately, the industry is loathe to put development money into creating good adventure games, because the crap ones already out there don't sell, and they are unlikely to risk anything that isn't guaranteed to earn a decent return.

Light at the end of the tunnel

But at least we're seeing an end to the real scourge of this once most noble of genres. Despite the concerted efforts of Take 2 Interactive and other misguided American developers, the interactive movie is dying out. Traditional-style adventures such as LucasArts' *Monkey Island 3* and Westwood's *Blade Runner* are evidence enough that people still want to buy and play adventure games – but only if they're of the quality of those so common just a few years ago. Classic adventures were always closer to literature than movie-making, and the sooner people realise this, the better.

But where exactly does the future for adventure games lie? Recently we've seen several companies attempting to try and innovate beyond the surface: the forthcoming *Gabriel Knight III* (due out this autumn) will ditch the traditional

Paul Cuisset – Delphine Project Director

PCZ: Your first three titles were all highly respected adventure games. Why did you stop producing them in favour of 3D actioners?

PC: We decided to go from 'pure' adventure games, such as *Future Wars* or *Operation Stealth*, to 'action' adventure games such as *Flashback* or *Fade To Black* because, firstly, the games mass market was moving from computers such as the Atari ST and Amiga to console game machines. On those machines you usually have to use your reflex skill, and not only your brain.

PCZ: So it was just a market forces thing?

PC: Well, I also like innovation and always want to, in general, push the envelope further. Thus I designed *Flashback* and *Fade*

To Black with the same 'adventure' spirit but with a completely new visual approach and a new user interface, making these products – we think – much more appealing and innovative.

PCZ: So no more 'pure' adventures from Delphine to come, then?

PC: (Goes official) Regarding the future, Delphine Software has no adventure games planned for now. But who knows? We might do 'pure' adventure games again one day.



Future Wars (1989)

A classic adventure from France. Stunning graphics (for the time), ingenious puzzles and arcade elements that complemented the main game proved that the Europeans could hold their own with the Americans. Delphine followed this with the classic *Operation Stealth*, which is also well worth tracking down.



The Secret Of Monkey Island (1990)

Comedy is hard to get right in games but, thanks to Ron Gilbert, *Monkey Island* is one of the most entertaining adventures ever. People still talk about it today, fondly remembering the classic sword-fighting scenes, the brilliant characters and the really creative puzzles. A true all-time classic.



Lure Of The Temptress (1992)

Notable for its Virtual Theatre technology, which enabled the developers to create a living world in which the characters went about their business regardless of what you were doing at the time. Great graphics, top comedy moments and many well thought-out puzzles make this a classic. Plus, it's British. Huzzah!



icon-driven interface and opt instead for a world with far more freedom to move around; Westwood made a noble stab at enhancing the role of the non-player characters in *Blade Runner*; Revolution seem to be heading back on the right track by suggesting that they want to re-explore the groundbreaking Virtual Theatre system; and LucasArts are once again putting story first with *Grim Fandango* (see page 40).

But from what we've seen, the most promising of them all appears to be *Starship Titanic* (see page 95), from Douglas Adams' Digital Village. More than any other game of late, it is attempting to recreate the feel of the classic text-input adventure, with a highly comprehensive dialogue system and some fiendishly well-designed puzzles (Adams has the distinction of having designed one of the best puzzles ever seen in an adventure game in Infocom's version of *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*).

There's a long way to go before we're likely to see anything as memorable as the games of old, but at least the signs are promising. And maybe, just maybe, we might once again have a thriving, prosperous and, most importantly, respected genre to enjoy. **Z**



Today's adventures rely heavily (too heavily in cases such as *Riven*, below) on graphical wizardry to impress. The main problem is that software houses demand big sales in the US, so low common denominators rule the day.



Chris's Excellent Adventure

The world according to Anderson.

The notion of what makes a perfect adventure game differs from one individual to the next. Some people enjoy interactive movies because they don't tax their brains too much. Others love games like *Myst* and *Riven* because they can impress their friends with pretty graphics (however shallow this might be considered by some). Then, of course, you have the old school, the true die-hard adventurers who fondly remember the brilliant LucasArts adventures of yesteryear.

Ultimately, the perfect adventure is one that remains highly entertaining and challenging within the confines of whatever rules it sets for itself at the beginning of its development. Fans looking for examples can turn to *Gabriel Knight 3* (interactive movie), *Myst* (interactive picture book) and *Monkey Island 3* (classic point-and-click) for classic examples of each type of adventure. What we need now is other developers building on the innovations set by the likes of Douglas Adams, LucasArts and Westwood, and taking things a stage further. The only thing that should limit adventure games is technology, not innovation and imagination.



Gabriel Knight (1993)

The first – and best – in the *Gabriel Knight* series, this highly atmospheric chiller is famed for being one of the few games to use 'star' names effectively – Tim Curry's voiceover for the main character is excellent. Sierra chose to make an interactive movie for the sequel, which didn't win them any friends.



Blade Runner (1997)

The long-overdue game of the movie arrived to a mixed reception, but its multiple-path storyline makes it arguably one of the most re-playable adventures ever made. Slightly dodgy graphics don't detract from an atmospheric adventure which remains true to the *Blade Runner* universe from start to finish.



Starship Titanic (1998)

Modern adventures tend to rely on their visual treats to provide interest. Despite some stunning scenery, ST's real innovation is that it takes you back to the level of interaction that used to be achieved in the old text adventures from Infocom, mainly thanks to the welcome reintroduction of text input.





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ZONE On-Line

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What do we want? More UK servers.
When do we want them? Now.

All kinds of hoo-hah are keeping the on-line gaming gossips busy this month, not least of which is the legal battle currently raging in the USA over *Ultima Online*. Recent reports tell of five *UO* players issuing lawsuits against Origin for a lapse in their service. Considering the size and scope of a project like *Ultima Online*, you'd expect there to be problems initially. Yet it seems that some impatient players feel they're not getting their money's worth.

It's a fine line. Since *UO*'s introduction last year, the service has been off-line on a number of occasions and has required constant updating of the client software, often causing the user to have to wait long hours to download files. That said, no one else has anything *better* to offer. Origin seem to be heading in the right direction with *Ultima Online*, and to run into legal troubles at this point may scupper the whole project. Maybe a change in pricing is all it will take to convince people that *UO* really is all worth it? Interest in a European server is growing. So much so that Origin are now in talks with a number of ISPs over here. The UK could have its very own *UO* server very soon.

The legal problems in the States are unlikely to affect this either, partly because of timing (a UK server could feasibly be up and running as early as May), and partly because these legal problems will hopefully iron themselves out when Origin finally get their server-to-client software working perfectly again. This will probably only happen when individual territories get their own servers. By dividing the number of servers in the *UO* universe, Origin can work on keeping the speed up and players happy.

Virgin are another company that seem to know their stuff when it comes to on-line games – their deep-space *Asteroids* clone *SubSpace* has finally made it into the mainstream. Unfortunately there are delays with their UK server (originally promised for April) as well.

If I were to make a 'guesstimate' for the arrival time of a Euro-server for either of these games, it would have to be July – the one time of year when everyone's outside tanning their arse...

Paul Mallinson



C&C: FROM THE FRONT OUR REGULAR PERSONAL REPORT FROM THE ON LINE GAMING FRONTIER Sole Survivor

Jamie Cunningham now spends his every waking hour playing Internet games, making his phone bill so improbably large that BT will think it's an error, apologise profusely and reset it back to zero. (Shhh, don't spoil it for him.)



CLOSE YOUR EYES FOR A moment and picture me as a top Italian chef from a chic restaurant somewhere in London. Try to imagine that I've

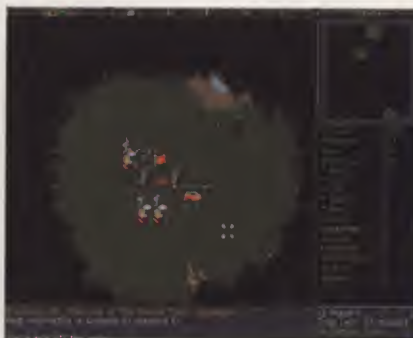
just created the most amazing *arista alla Fiorentina* using a secret recipe. The pork is from a special breed of pig; the olive oil filtered through a rare Tuscan beechwood; the black pepper ground between the thighs of Sicilian virgins. Suddenly, people from all corners of the globe are falling over themselves to eat at my swanky nosherie. Hollywood stars are jetting over just so they can get their American-size laughing gear round my dainty portions of ham. Wars are postponed, elections are averted. And yet the people want more – *much* more. More exciting. More exotic. More dishes to send

their taste buds into paroxysms of delight. But how am I to do this?

Of course! Instead of adding new ingredients, why not take them out? Forget the bay leaves, forget the celery sticks. Who needs red hot chilli peppers? Who wants Barolo wine? Goodbye, olive oil. So long, black peppers. *Et voilà* – a dish so daring in its simplicity that it looks exactly like, er, a bacon sandwich. Shit.

Dog's business

With *C&C: Sole Survivor*, Westwood have taken their most popular dish and served it up without any of its mouth-watering ingredients. Not one of the herbs and spices that made *Command & Conquer* a landmark game are present. No resource management and no base building. No missions and no armies. Not even a side salad of new terrain – just you rolling around familiar-



(Left) Back at HQ, just before logging on as a green team member and shooting them all in the back with a large tank. (Cheat? Me?) (Right) Hey, he's got our flag! Help! Help! Oh, who cares...





(Above) Each base has a handful of defensive structures – guard them fiercely, as they can't be repaired. (Right) Grim Reaper and Blood fight it out near a transporter. Obvious, really.

◀ looking maps, picking up crates and getting bored.

"No, no, no!" I hear the folks at Westwood cry. "You're missing the point." Am I? So what is the point? What we have here is a 'new' game that's built around one tiny aspect of an old game. It's like playing a game of Monopoly where you're not allowed to buy anything. Or a game of Snap without cards – you just shout "Snap!" and argue a lot.

The core theme of it all is that you're on your own. You can choose from a bunch of units you're already familiar with, plus a few dinosaurs. Yup, dinosaurs – plod around as a triceratops, biting the wheels off tanks and stomping on troops (funnily enough, it's as crap as it sounds). Anyway, the idea is to be the last one standing. Pick up crates to get power boosts like extra speed or more powerful ammunition. Some crates restore 100 per cent health, others transport you to a random destination. And, well, that's about it.

(Right) Westwood's chat application is still lacking in the presentation department, but seems stable and is up to the job it was designed for. (Below) This bastard nicked our flag. So we killed him.



Product details

Game: Sole Survivor
 Publisher: Virgin/Westwood
 Max no of players: 36
 Server: US (UK to follow soon)
 Website: www.westwood.com

It gets worse

The one and only way to play the game is over the Internet. The server is Westwood's own, meaning it's (a) in America, and (b) already creaking under the weight of other games. Sure, you can pick a quiet time to log on, but why? A quiet time means nobody else is up there. And what if you can't log on at all? Simple: you can't play. Yes, there's an off-line 'practice' mode for you to potter about in, but that has a near zero entertainment factor. So no Internet, no game.

To be honest, it's not completely awful. For example, playing in a game with 36 other people can be manic fun, although it can quickly get tiresome as experienced players beef themselves up and pick on weedy newbies (ie people like me).

There are a few game variations, including Capture the Flag, Football, Dinos Only and Infantry Only, but most aren't worth writing home about, let alone cranking up your phone bill for. Capture the Flag seems to be the firm favourite, with the vast majority of game channels being a battle to fight your way into an enemy base, pinch their flag and then scoot off home with it.

Verdict, please

It's a cheese bun from the masters of haute cuisine. For die-hard Westwood fans it offers nothing bar a box in the same style as the others on your shelf. For the first-timer it'll be a big disappointment, as there's no comeback factor. It's okay in ten-minute doses, but stick at it for much longer than that and you'll be desperate to hang up the phone and get back to brushing the dog.



FROM THE FRONT

OUR REGULAR PERSONAL REPORT FROM THE ON LINE GAMING FRONTIER



STARTING OFF AS A SIMPLE INTERNET experiment, *SubSpace* has now evolved into what can only be described as a phenomenon. More than 100,000 players regularly play on-line. And after being in various stages of testing for nearly two years, Virgin are gearing up for a full UK release with a London-based server that'll wipe away all fears of latency.

For those unfamiliar with the concept of *SubSpace*, imagine *Asteroids* set in a tangle of broken corridors (but without the actual asteroids) and you'll be pretty much there in terms of summing the whole thing up. Save for a few important details, the idea is simple: choose one of seven ships, find a suitable arena, jump in and kill everyone inside.

The US server on which we played offers a range of games that stretch from the usual deathmatch-type stuff, through to races, capture-the-flag tournaments and tag games, with a few hybrids chucked in for good measure. The UK server currently under construction will offer much the same range of services as well as (it is hoped) a few new ones.

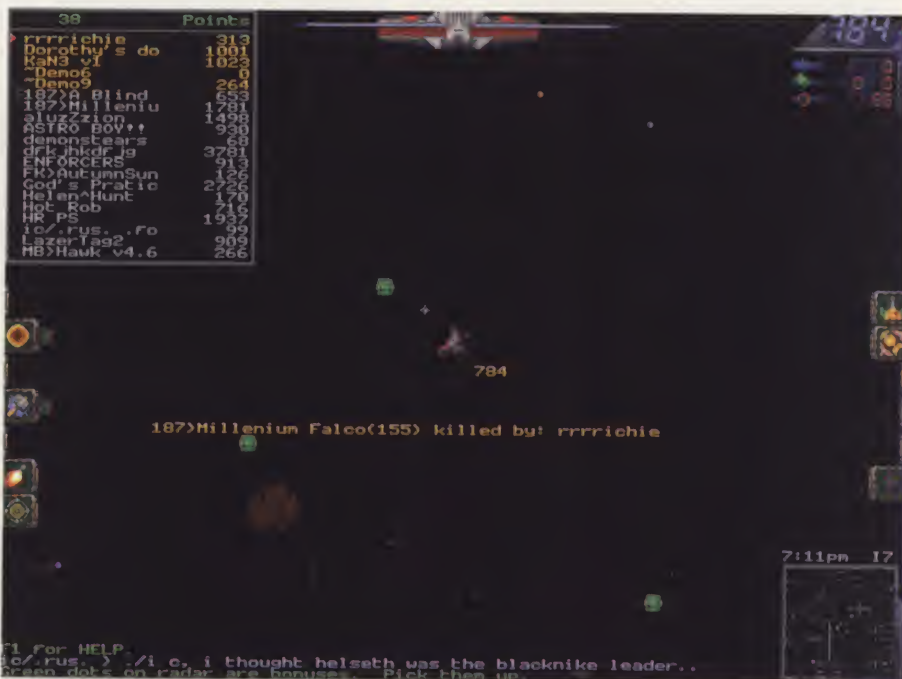
Most new players will go straight to one of the 'Alpha' arenas that are set up especially for fresh meat, and it is there that the basics of flight and combat are learnt. Death is a common occurrence until you become accustomed to the game mechanics, and there are a few elements that may put a few people off initially. Shots seem to move too slowly and, with ships bouncing off of walls and pillars with unnerving regularity, it's more than a little frustrating to have 'neg-killers' – who prey on the new pilots, circling for the quick kill. All the ships except the Warbird (which turns quicker) seem to have the manoeuvrability of an articulated lorry, and you really have to practise before you begin to appreciate the game's hidden qualities. Thankfully, there's also the option to practise off-line, though it's not the most exciting way of gaining experience.

Each game map is liberally spattered with power-ups which not only upgrade your ship, but also advance those of your teammates. If you're after nothing but a mindless blast, there's no need to fret over the fortunes of others, but the team-play element offers a more tactical and social game which for many could be almost as rewarding as anything offered by on-line *Quake*.

Playing the game on a US server, it wasn't surprising to find

SubSpace

Virgin's new on-line release, *SubSpace*, is simple, mildly annoying and cheap to access. Why, that sounds like **Richie Shoemaker!**



The idea is simple: choose one of seven ships, find a suitable arena, jump in and kill everyone inside.

most of the main arenas well-populated, even when most of the people on them should have been tucked up in bed. We didn't really experience too much lag, although in our first hour we were disconnected from the server no less than three times due to network access points being clogged up. The proposed European server, due at the end of May, should do away with these problems, so it's something we'll obviously have to come back to when it's all up and running. Also, if you've been playing the old demo version, be warned: your days are numbered. Virgin are phasing out 'demo' players already, in favour of players who've bought the full game, so prepare to shell out.

With graphical improvements already in place, and completely free access, it's still good value for money at just £14.99, but for people who have yet to experience the game it may be wise to wait and see how things pan out.



Even though *SubSpace* is seemingly easy to play, it's more than a little infuriating to learn.

Product details

Game: *SubSpace*
Version: 1.33
Publisher: Virgin
Max no of players: 100 per arena
Server: UK/US
Price: £14.99; free server access
Website: www.SubSpace.vie.com



Some may find *SubSpace* a little confusing when they first start off. Hurrah for detailed help files, we say!





Wireplay
The games network from BT

NewsWire

This month's hottest information from Wireplay,
the UK's busiest on-line games site...

Joined at the hip

IF YOU'RE FINDING IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO find worthy opponents to play against on-line, Wireplay's clan area is the place to visit to kick some ass. Currently housing 16 clans (or clubs), each of these areas gives gaming gladiators the chance to arrange tournaments to the death against other would-be champs. *Age Of Empires*, *Total Annihilation*, *Incubation*, *Gettysburg* and *Quake II* are just a few of the latest games to be honoured by a clan page, and the number is soon to be increased.

League tables have already been established for pretty much all of these games, and it just remains for you to get off your gutless backside and plunge in. If you think you're the best, then get in there prove it.

Latest clan/club list

- Age Of Empires
- Armored Fist 2
- Big Red Racing
- Descent & Descent 2
- Chess
- Command & Conquer
- Doom
- Duke Nukem 3D
- EF2000
- Gettysburg
- Incubation
- Jedi Knight
- Netmech/MechWarrior
- Red Alert
- Total Annihilation
- Warcraft II

Player of the month



Think you're the hardest *Quake II* player in the land? Reckon your *C&C* forces can outgun the US Navy? Well go and prove it. The most outstanding player of the month will be forever immortalised right here. This is your chance to get your name in lights. So come on – what are you waiting for?

Jedi finds home at Wireplay

WIREPLAY HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT VIRGIN'S *MYSTERIES OF The Sith* is to join their bustling nest. The stunning *Jedi Knight* data disk is bound to attract a few potential Jedi masters and should be available by the time you read this. More good news comes in the form of *Forsaken* (see review on page 80), a demo version of which will be available for multi-play soon.

The racers and flyers among you should be smiling too, with *Cart Precision Racing* and the superb *F-22 Air Dominance Fighter* also making an appearance. More signings are due to be announced shortly.



Play the *Sith* pack on-line.

New Wireplay client software released

WIREPLAY'S EAGERLY AWAITED VERSION 2.1 OF THEIR CLIENT SOFTWARE HAS IMPROVED PING (lag) times yet again by bringing them consistently into the region of 150 milliseconds – even with 28.8 modems! Incredibly, this is still twice as fast as most other sites on the Internet and means that games like *Quake II* (where up to 32 players can take part) are now faster and better than ever.

In addition, a new 'Wirepager' system enables you to send messages instantly to fellow on-line gamers. On top of that there's even a 'Who's Here' option that informs you who is on-line and where they are. It just goes to show what a completely separate network can do for you.

Money matters

WIREPLAY HAVE SLIGHTLY REVAMPED THEIR PAYMENT METHOD AND NOW OFFER TWO WAYS TO PAY. You can pay as you go, which works out at about £1.50 per hour, or take out a subscription service offering unlimited access for a monthly payment of £9.95 (plus local call charges). Credit cards are acceptable, and rest assured that Wireplay will take good care of your card number.

Pushing the Richter scale to its limit

IF YOU'RE A *QUAKE* FAN, YOU'LL BE delighted to hear about the massive 250 per cent increase in capacity of its Wireplay server.

This new, London-based epicenter has replaced the old quaking (groan) server and is also set to host *Air Attack*, a new multi-player-only flight sim which will hopefully prove 'very popular' with armchair pilots across the country.



ALL THE GAMES ON THE SITE

If you can't find anything to tickle your fancy from this bumper selection then you obviously don't understand what playing games is all about

- Actua Soccer/Club Edition
- Age Of Empires

- Armored Fist 2
- Daytona Deluxe
- Daytona Deluxe demo
- Big Red Racing
- Blood (v 1.1)
- Blood Shareware (v 1.1)
- Comanche 3
- C&C: Red Alert
- Descent

- Descent 2
- Descent 2 demo
- Doom (v 1.9)
- Doom Shareware
- Doom II
- Ultimate Doom
- Duke Nukem 3D
- EF2000/Wireplay Edition
- Euro 96

- Extreme Assault
- MS Flight Sim 98
- Formula Karts
- Fragile Allegiance
- Sid Meier's Gettysburg
- G-Nome
- Incubation
- Jedi Knight
- MUD II

- NASCAR Racing 2
- NetMech
- (MechWarrior 2)
- Quake
- Red Alert: Counterstrike
- Red Alert: The Aftermath
- Redneck Rampage
- Shadow Warrior
- Shareware (v 1.1)

- Shadow Warrior
- Terminal Velocity
- Total Annihilation
- Virtua Fighter 2
- Virtua Fighter 2 demo
- Virtual Pool
- Virtual Snooker
- Warcraft II
- Warcraft II demo



SPECIAL REPORT • SPECIAL REPORT • SPECIAL REPORT • SPECIAL REPORT

Total Annihilation – don't get mad, get even

Those TA fiends are a bit on the cunning side, but then so are we. And you can be too if you read on...

IF YOU WANT TO KICK SOME ASS AT MULTI-PLAYER *TOTAL Annihilation*, then you really should get some practice on single-player Skirmish mode first. This contains the same maps as the multi-player game, so it pays to familiarise yourself with the lay of the land as much as possible. Spend a few hours playing through the missions, and look at ambush points and come up with some kind of strategy. Entering the shell-shocked zone of TA without proper training is like taking on a Marine with a pea-shooter – you'll get hammered. And that just ain't fun.

Learn where the hot keys are, and use them instead of the on-screen menu. Most on-line players are fast, so if you can use these keys to handle four tasks while your enemy completes just two, then you're already at an advantage. Speed, speed, speed – it's impossible to emphasise just how important this is.

Only the strong survive

Learn your opponents' tactics. Most players tend to adopt a certain style and stick with it. For example: is your enemy defensive or offensive? Do they prefer ground attacks or air strikes? Do they make alliances or go it alone? Think about these things and develop strategies to counteract them. Obviously people will think they can work out your tactics too, so try to vary them as much as possible. Always try to keep your opponents guessing, and never follow a set pattern.

Every game eventually develops its own individual rhythm. However, it's worth keeping in mind that, like chess, for example, TA can be split into three parts: the opening gambit, mid-game strategy, and closing tactics.

Three little tips

A good opening strategy is to deploy scouts to destroy enemy



Use the 'Guard' command to keep your units together. Keep a construction unit handy so you can repair damaged units in the heat of battle.

resources. You're not going to win anything immediately this way, but inhibiting your opponents' building capabilities will set their development back and at the same time prove very annoying. Just don't let it disrupt your progression too much.

During the mid part of the game, the battles become large-scale affairs with many casualties. Keep checking your foes' statistics – you might find a sudden lapse in manpower that can be exploited with a quick strike. Also, if there are quite a few players, make sure you are allied with someone at this point. If the shit really starts to hit the fan you might need a friend.

Finally, if you approach the end of the game with heavy artillery, and therefore have every chance of winning, search for more resources. This simply ensures that all your efforts don't come to a sudden and unhappy conclusion. The main thing to remember is to be quick, and practice, practice, practice. There are plenty of willing opponents out there to test new strategies on, so get out there and kick some ass!

MEET THE TEAM

Come and challenge the PC Zone game experts on-line and show us what you're made of. We'll be up for a scrap on the following dates:

Wednesday 22 April 6pm AGE OF EMPIRES

Take on our very own AOE expert – Mr Chris Anderson!

Wednesday 29 April 6pm TOTAL ANNIHILATION

Novices and newbies only please! We don't wanna get beat!

Wednesday 13 May, 6pm QUAKE II

Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough!
NB. Maps and rules TBC.



A patch in time

The latest patches you'll need to play *Quake* on-line with Wireplay are now available (check the CD-ROM on page 6)

New UK Wireplay Client v2.1
updated 23/3/98
QuakeWorld patch
updated 18/3/98
Quake II 3.13 to 3.14 patch
updated 3/3/98
Quake II CTF 102 patch
updated 3/3/98
Quake II 3.13 release patch
updated 26/2/98
QView 5.0
updated 5/2/98

The facts

How to get onto Wireplay

For more information or tech support queries, ring the Wireplay help desk on 0345 577577. For a free CD with the latest client software and some free games, phone 0800 800 918. To visit the Wireplay site, point browser in the direction of www.wireplay.co.uk.

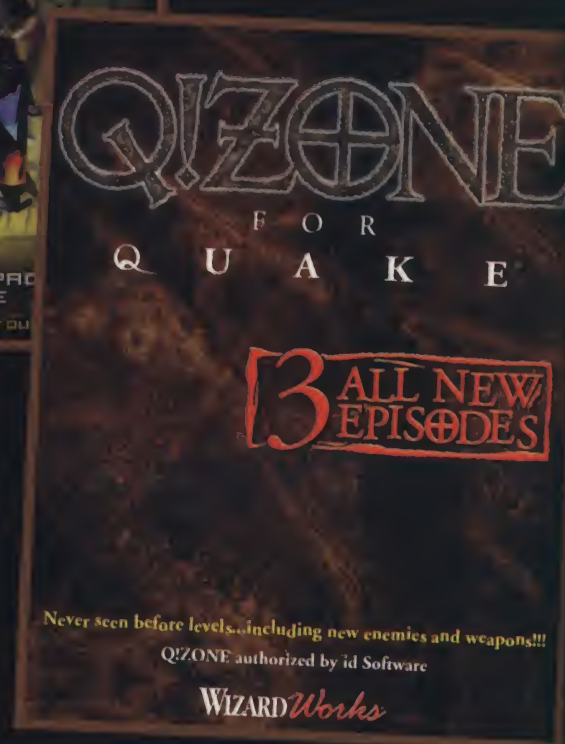
TALK TO PC ZONE

Anything you want to tell us about Wireplay and playing games on-line? You can e-mail us on letters. pczone@dennis.co.uk. We'll do our best to get back to you asap.

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Tech ZONE

Time to upgrade again?

WE'VE FINALLY GOT our hands on a Voodoo 2 3Dfx card and managed to find a couple of games that have been designed to take advantage of the new technology.

To be honest, the reaction around the office to what we saw on the screen of our test PC was one of muted disappointment. *Quake II* may run faster in high-res, but when you're dashing around like a mad man dodging rockets, you don't really get time to appreciate the super-sharp 800x600 picture on your screen, do you? Both *Incoming* and *Forsaken* (reviewed on pages 74 and 80 respectively) look fantastic, but to be perfectly honest they look pretty good running on a normal 3Dfx card too.

So is it worth lashing out more wedge on a new Voodoo 2 card? Well, on the face of it, no. You'd be better of waiting a bit until the price comes down and there's more software support. And if you can wait a little bit longer or you haven't got the cash, then we recommend you hang on for the new Banshee card. This (allegedly) is a proper next-generation 3D card that's not only faster, but seriously meaty in the effects department too. And only a fool would discount the new PowerVR card. If you believe the hype, it knocks Voodoo 2 out of the water – but then it relies heavily on DirectX6.0, so software support might again be lacking in the early stages. We'll keep you posted...

Chris Anderson



Incoming is optimised for Voodoo 2. But so what?



Creative Labs 3D Blaster Voodoo2

Just when you thought your Pentium II and 3Dfx card made you the best-endowed kid on the block, 3Dfx have gone and spoilt things by releasing a new, faster chipset. Dave Mathieson takes a look.



IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS OR SO, the battle for supremacy between the different 3D accelerator cards on the market has pretty much been won by 3Dfx with their Voodoo chipset.

There are plenty of decent competitors, like VideoLogic/NEC's PowerVR, and nVidia's Riva 128, but while these chipsets both have enough wellie to give 3Dfx a run for its money, they lose out in one essential area – compatibility. The fact is that if you want the widest choice of accelerated games to run on your PC, a 3Dfx card is the only choice. What's more, the inner workings of the 3Dfx chips mean that they make a big difference even on slower PCs, something which can't be said of the competition.

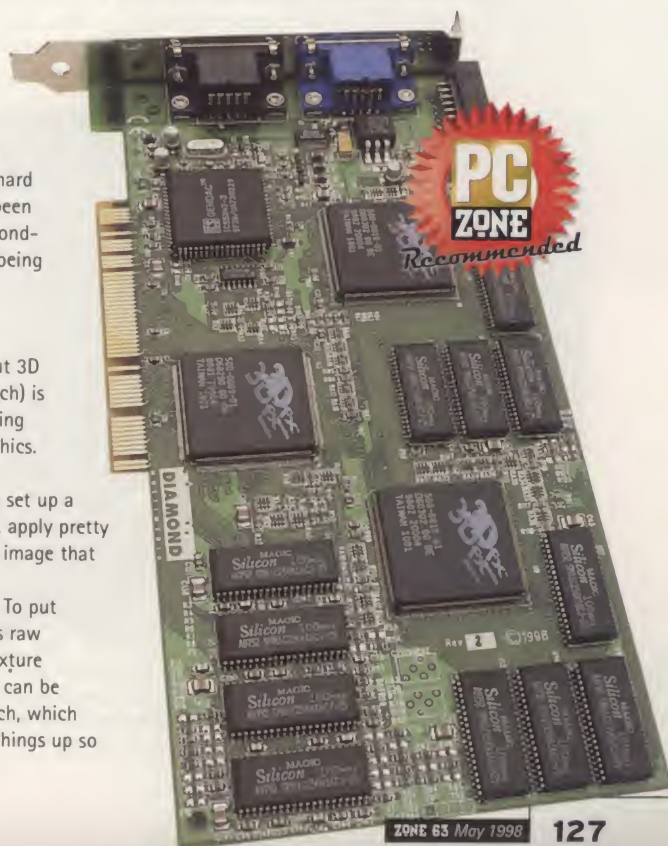
But the original 3Dfx Voodoo chipset is around two years old now, and the competition haven't been hanging about. VideoLogic have announced a successor to PowerVR, and there are plenty of others, including the mighty Intel, who think they're hard enough to have a go. 3Dfx haven't been sitting idly by, though, and their second-generation chipset, the Voodoo2, is being eagerly snapped up by card manufacturers such as Diamond, Orchid and Creative Labs.

One of the interesting things about 3D accelerators (if you don't get out much) is that different cards use widely differing ways of generating those lovely graphics. There are a heck of a lot of clever calculations that have to be made to set up a scene, stick textures onto everything, apply pretty lighting effects and turn it into a 2D image that your monitor can display, and it all has to happen 30 times a second. To put it crudely, 3Dfx's Voodoo chipset uses raw horsepower in the form of custom texture processing chips to achieve this. This can be contrasted with the PowerVR approach, which concentrates much more on setting things up so

that there's less texture processing to be done in the first place. Voodoo2 is basically a super-charged Voodoo, with more processors, and more memory for textures.

The Creative Labs 3D Blaster Voodoo2 comes in two models, with 8Mb and 12Mb of texture RAM. The 12Mb on our model, along with the three processing chips, takes up quite a bit of room, making for a pretty hefty card. Installing it was simple, and it uses the same monitor pass-through cable as earlier 3Dfx cards. There's another cable supplied as well that can be used to connect a second card using something called SLI. This stands for Scan Line Interleave, and it means

The Creative Labs Voodoo 2 card comes with an impressive bundle of software.





The lush *Forsaken* and the beautiful *Incoming* running under Voodoo 2. We couldn't really see much difference in performance, to be honest.

"It's fast, but not sufficiently faster than standard 3Dfx cards to warrant the extra cost. Unless you've got a Pentium II, that is."

that flash Harrys can use both cards at once for even higher resolutions. But if you've got this kind of dosh you probably don't read *Zone*, as your rich dad buys you every game in existence as soon as it comes out anyway. And you probably haven't got any friends.

Plug & Play

Back with our humble one-card setup, the drivers installed without any hassle. The various settings on offer are accessed through a tab in Display Properties. These are mostly pretty straightforward, and although there is a screen of nasty-looking settings that you

can play with if things go wrong, we didn't have any problems with the defaults.

Okay, so it's new, it's fast, it's big and it costs a couple of hundred quid. But what does the 3D Blaster Voodoo2 do for games? To test the card, we installed it in a pretty average P200MMX PC with 32Mb of RAM, and tried it with *Quake II*, the *Descent*-tastic *Forsaken*, and *Incoming*. For the first two, we managed to measure the actual frame rate, but for *Incoming* we had to use pure skill and judgement, developed after years of staying up all night being sad. The old-style Voodoo card that we used for

reference purposes was a miroHISCORE 3D, which is the one that came out tops in our last 3D card roundup.

First up was *Quake II*. If we were trying to flog a new graphics card that we reckoned was the best ever, we'd make bloody sure that it did the business where iD's masterpiece was concerned. We tried the Voodoo2 in three resolutions, 512x384, 640x480 and 800x600. At the lowest of these, the Voodoo2 did marginally better than the Voodoo card, managing 33 frames per second as opposed to 28. At 640x480, the scores were 33 again for Voodoo2, but only 21 for Voodoo. Finally, at 800x600 the Voodoo2 scored 33 (again), but the plain old Voodoo couldn't manage this resolution at all. This 33fps limit seems a bit odd, and you'd be forgiven

for thinking that the card should have been faster in the lower resolutions. In fact, these scores demonstrate just how powerful the Voodoo2 is. Remember, *Quake II* is quite a demanding game, and our PC isn't exactly state-of-the-art. Before the graphics card can start strutting its stuff, the PC's CPU has to do some initial calculations, which are the same no matter what resolution you're running in. As soon as these have been carried out, the Voodoo2 gobbles them up, displays the image, and has to hang around for the CPU to do the next lot of calculations. The fact that the frame rate was the same for each resolution means that our CPU simply isn't fast enough to manage any more, and that we'd need a much faster PC to make the Voodoo2 really work.

We got similar results with *Forsaken*, although the scores were much closer between the Voodoo and Voodoo2. This indicates that *Forsaken* is much more crap-PC-friendly, and a Voodoo2 is largely wasted here. Finally, *Incoming* looked noticeably smoother with the Voodoo2, indicating a *Quake II*-type situation.

Should I buy one?

So is it worth forking out over £200 for a Voodoo2 card when you can get last year's model for under £100? The simple answer is no, for the moment. While you can play *Quake II* at higher resolutions on a slow PC, the difference in image quality between 800x600 and 512x384 isn't as great as you might think. What's more, compatibility hasn't been fully sorted out yet, and there are lots of 3Dfx games that don't work with the new cards (although you can bet games companies are beaver away on patches right now). There's no doubt that Voodoo2 is the way forward, though, and new games will be soon appearing that'll need a Pentium II. When this happens, Voodoo2 will come into its own, and by then cards like the 3D Blaster will have come down in price, and PC gaming will rule. Or something. 2



With a Voodoo2 card, you get pretty much the same frame rate, but in a much higher resolution of 800x600. Although this is pretty impressive, the extra resolution doesn't really improve the gameplay all that much.

Price: £229 for 12Mb version
Release date: Out now
Manufacturer: Creative Labs
Tel: 01245 265265
Website: www.creativelabs.com

80

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Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

Part 2: The truth about sligs and slogs

7

IF YOU'VE GOT THIS FAR (WHICH YOU WILL have done if you followed Part 1 of our walkthrough), you should find the rest comparatively easy. There are a few new surprises in store, so let's saddle up...

while Elum shoos them away. Go left and disarm the bomb, then climb aboard Elum and leap across the two chasms – keep going before the slig shoots you.

03 Time to leave your steed again. Climb up and jump into the well. Possess the slig and drop down to the left and blow the other slig away. Use the slig to gain access to the lever by walking him onto a mine. Now get Abe down to pull the lever. Get Elum and take the lift to the top. Now it's just a seemingly endless series of running jumps to the next section.

With triumphant, trouser-shredding relief, **Richie Shoemaker** reaches the end of his epic journey. Totally spent, he leans back to tell the final part of his story. Are you sitting comfortably (sic)?

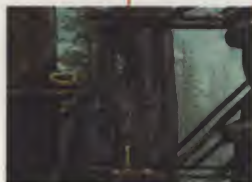
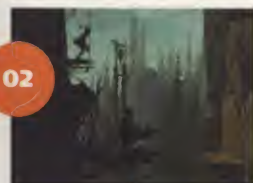


Paramonia

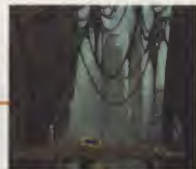
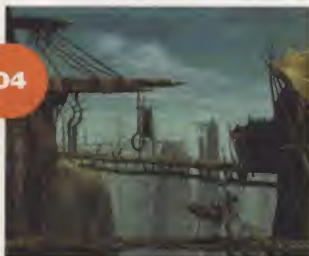
01 To kill the sleeping guard, just activate the bomb and climb up, then get yourself some rocks and throw them at the mines on the next screen. Pull the lever to activate the well. Go back and jump through it, pull the ring, mount your steed and then jump the chasm.

02 Say 'hello', whistle '8668' and then fart to bring down the lift.

Dismount and go up. Now creep left and lob a stone to detonate the mine next to the sleeping slig. Go back and get Elum, and go up the second lift where Elum should get stuck into the honey. Throw a rock at the nest and move away



04 Dismount and pull the ring. Now go down to the bottom and pull the lever. Touch the stone to get the password, and then jump into the well. Leap across to the right, pull the ring and go back down and jump through the well. Get Elum to follow you left. Go down on the lift.

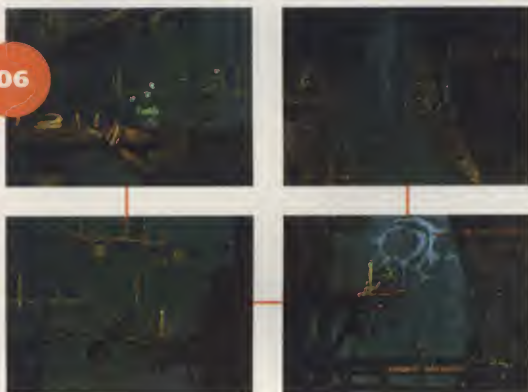


05 Say 'hello', whistle '6886' then fart, and the mudokon will bring down the lift. Go left and down.

Possess the slig and shoot the other two. You can now go and get Elum and leap across the canyon into the final



06



09



◀ section. Possess the slig, go right and shoot the other guard. Now leave Elum and jump into the well.

Paramonian Temple

06 Possess the first guard – just jump through the well and chant. Use the slig to kill the slog, and go down the lift. Avoiding the bats, kill the second guard.

07 Leap up to the platform and go left. Jump over to the left, then jump right to lower Abe down and pull the lever. Take the lift up until you get some meat. Use this to distract the paramite guarding the stone at the bottom. Go back up to where the mudokon is, say 'hello', whistle '68686' then trump it. Use the power to destroy all the mines you see. You can now activate the flintlock lever. Jump through the well, run and leap left and go through the door.

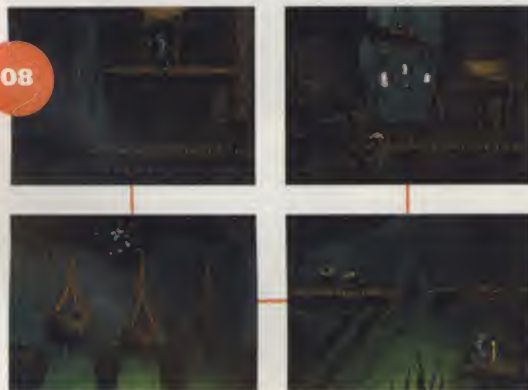


07



08 Go left to grab the guard's attention, then run right and leap onto the platform. Take the slig over. Go left and shoot the second slig. Go left. The boulders are tricky – you can either use precision timing or just roll about and hoist yourself up to dodge the bats. Next, creep up to the bomb and arm it. Go right and the slog will unintentionally kill itself as it tries to chase you. Pull the lever, touch the stone and go back to the start (picking up stones along the way) and go right. Detonate the mine, chant and exit.

09 This one's a biggie. Go up and get some meat and then continue up. Go left and you'll notice that the lever activates

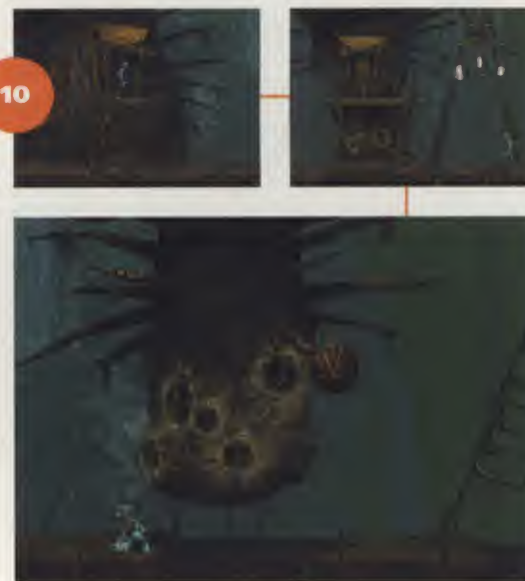


08

11



10



10 You can sit back and have a bit of a rest now, because this bit's easy peasy. All you have to do is use the trip switches to crush the paramites. With just a little bit of practice you'll be out of this bit in no time.

11 Feeling relaxed? Good, because here's another easy one. After navigating your way past the swinging boulders, you have to disarm all the bombs, sneak left and pull the lever and get the hell out.

12 Fear not the paramite. Go left and get some meat. Go up to the top and take the upper-left route. Roll across until you activate the boulder, roll right until you end up clinging to a ledge. The boulder will crush the slog and you can pull the lever and get the exit password. Jump through the well to activate the flintlock, and use the meat to distract the slogs while you get out.



12



13



Paramonian Nests

13 Jump though the well to scout out the terrain. This level is pretty tricky, so you'll end up dying countless times until you get it right. You'll need meat to distract the 'mites at the end. If at first you don't succeed...

Stockyard

14 The only way is up. Go right carefully, avoiding detection, and start running. Jump and go right where there are more security beams. Pull the lever and go back left. Jump over the slog and run left until you get to the first set of detectors; leap up, and kill the slog as you trip the light beams. Now go right and down where you can pick up some stones. You'll need them to destroy the floating mines further on.



14



15 Making sure you've got a couple of rocks in reserve, run right and then roll right, then jump up to a free ledge. Go right again where you can summon a portal. Go through. From the ledge, jump down and disarm the bomb and then jump back to the left-hand ledge, making sure you trip the sensors. You will now be able to pull the lever and go right, where you'll have to trick a slog into blowing itself up. Now it's back to familiar territory...



Zulag 1

16 Back at Rupture Farms (you should remember the layout from before). There are loads more mudokons to rescue and you'll need to use skills you've acquired elsewhere to succeed. Use grenades and special powers wherever possible, and don't forget there are save points everywhere. Handy tip: sligs can command slogs. Take far-right door to get to Zulag 2.



16



15



21



17



Zulag 2

17 Sneak up to the ledge above the entrance and take over the slig. Go left and copy the security prompt to open the door. Kill the slig and take Abe up in the lift.

18 Go right until you get to the lever. Pull it and jump down quickly. Jump back up when the slig falls down so you can take him over. Open the security beams, kill the approaching guard then explode. Take all three mudokons to the portal and send all three through at the same time - this will activate the ultimate power in the universe (sort of). Now take the lift up and pull the lever. Go right and chant. Take over the slig that enters, and then run right and kill the last slig.



18



19 Run right and jump up to the next platform. Take over the slig and order the slog to follow you right. Get the slog to kill the other slig, and then shoot it and explode. Go right and get the sleeping guard to follow you left where you can take him over. Go right and kill the pack of slogs before exploding. Now just free the two mudokons.



19



20 Go right and leap over the mines and creep into the next screen. Go right and up to the next level. Go left and plant a grenade on the trapdoor, then pull the lever to kill the slig. Go down and pull the lever, then go right and take the lift up. Dispatch the slig with a well-placed grenade, pull the lever and go back and destroy the first two mines before rescuing the mudokons.

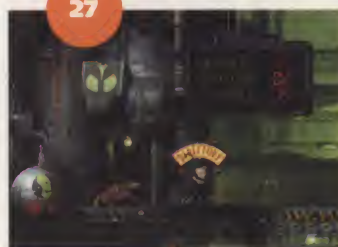


20



Zulag 3

21 Creep left and wake the guard, then run right and jump up to the platform. Possess the slig and get the slog to follow you right. Tell the slog to kill the guard, then kill it. Now get Abe to pull the lever. You can now take the lift up.



22 Creep right past the sligs and hoist up to the upper platform. Take over the sleeping guard and go left. Pull the lever to drop the sligs down so you can kill them. Once they're all disposed of, get Abe to go up and get the mudokon to stand over the trapdoor. Go back down and summon the exit portal. Go through the door. Get some grenades, go down and get yourself a slig. After a small bloodbath and a few more possessions you should come to a security door. Once through, run right to dispatch the last slig before he kills the last two mudokons.

23 Go right, past the sleeping slig and climb up to the higher platform. Kill the slig with a grenade and go right. To destroy the guardian you have to hold down the 'throw' key for a count of five before launching your grenade at it. Now take over the slig and pull the lever. Explode it then go down to the bottom, carefully avoiding the falling carcasses. If you go right you'll find two mudokons to save. Go left and take over the two sligs and kill them. Go left again and pull the lever twice to take the lift (and the slig) to the top. If you pull the



lever again the slig will hopefully fall to its death. You should now be able to get four mudokons to the portal at the same time – and make sure you do, because you're going to need your scars activated for the next bit.

24 Face left and throw a grenade against the wall to destroy the first mine. Next, jump on the centre platform and walk off it to the right, and throw a grenade up to destroy the other mine. Pull the lever and make your way to the right-hand screen. Chant to destroy everything, then pull the lever and free the mudokon. Go right and kill the sleeping guard with a grenade. Go up and pull the lever and make your way to the exit...



Zulag 4

25 Go up and wait for the slig to exit left, then hoist up, go right and through the door.



26 Go right and grab the slig's attention, then run left and up to the platform. Possess the slig, go right and kill. Take the lift down. Kill. Go right. Kill, then explode. Controlling Abe, go down to where the first mudokon is and take over the slig guarding him. Explode, then free the mudokon. Go right and kill the sleeping slig with a grenade. Pull the lever and free the other mudokon. Go right and kill the other slig with another well-timed bomb, then go through the door.

27 Peg it right until you get to a platform where you can haul yourself to safety. Jump across to the left platform and kill the sligs with some grenades. You should now be able to save all three mudokons without too much bother. Possess the slig overhead and kill all the slogs before pulling the exit lever. Now make your way back.

28 Go left and kill the slig by hiding in the pipe and throwing a grenade. Cautiously make your way to the top platform, pull the lever and go through the door.



29 Go right and take over the slig. Pull the lever and quickly turn around – there'll be loads of slogs out for blood. Go left and pull the other lever. You don't have to worry too much about killing all the slogs here. Take Abe right and kill the slig before touching the sign marked 'Do not touch'.

The boardroom

30 The final leg, and it's another one that requires patience and practice. You only have two minutes, but don't rush – time your movements well. Oh, and by the way, you'll have to save the solitary mudokon, but you should have plenty of time to do it in. Once in the boardroom, let rip with your special power and pull the lever. Let's hope you've saved enough mudokons, otherwise it's back to the beginning. Ho-hum. **Z**

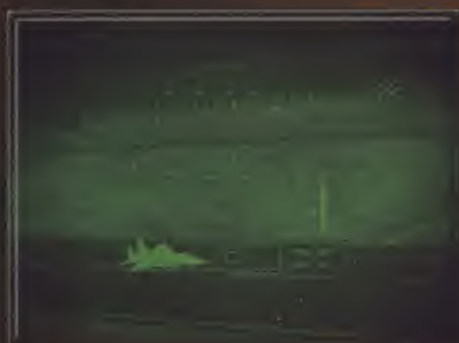


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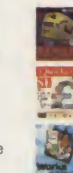
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PC ZONE

Welcome to the *PC Zone* Recommended section. Here you'll find the cream of the games we've painstakingly reviewed and picked out over the years, plus those we feel should go down in PC gaming history as all-time Classics.

W

ELCOME TO THE PC ZONE RECOMMENDS section. It is here that you will find, what are, in our considered opinion, the very best games ever released for the PC.

In an effort to keep it simple, we've spilt it up into genres: Action games, Sports simulations, Adventure games, Flight simulations, Driving games, Role-playing games and Strategy games.

The Top 10 games of each genre are then listed, with a brief summary of the game, review score, publisher and contact number. Most of the games listed here were awarded *PC Zone* Classic status (90 per cent and above), and some managed a *PC Zone* Recommended award (80 per cent and above) at the time that they were reviewed. To achieve the highest accolade, a game must not only be very playable, entertaining and offer long-term appeal, but it must also be original and/or offer something new and worthwhile to the gamer. To this end we've included some sequels which, although scored lower than the original title, are deemed better games (they didn't get a higher score cos it had already been done and therefore they weren't exactly bursting with originality – okay?), so this guide isn't a list of the highest scoring games ever reviewed by *PC Zone*, but a guide to the best games now available.

When you're reading the reviews in the rest of the magazine, please remember to bear this section in mind. The highest scoring game is supposed to represent a benchmark in a particular genre, and we will always be comparing new games with this, in accordance with the above criteria. As a result, you will see games dropping out of this section as new and better titles are released, so keep your eyes peeled for new entries in each of the genres.

Jeremy Wells, Editor

Recommended

Action



QUAKE II (97)

The sequel to "the most important PC game ever" turns out to be more than worth the wait. Despite the odd bit of slowdown, single-player and deathmatch games are in a league of their own. As Macca concluded in his review: "Quake II is pretty much perfect." Buy it now.

Publisher:

Activision (01895 456700)



TOMB RAIDER II (94)

The first game broke the mould, but the sequel even improves on the original. *Tomb Raider II* sports a curvier Lara, massive new levels to explore and a tidier control system. The game comes with native 3Dfx support and looks better than ever.

Publisher:

Core/Eidos (0181 636 3000)



JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II (94)

It's not *Quake*, but then it doesn't even try to be. But it is a compelling, technically superb blend of action and exploration wrapped up in the *Star Wars* universe. Altogether most impressive.

Publisher:

LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



HEXEN II (94)

The long-awaited, hub-based gib-fest sweeps into action with its trusty sword, hoping to carve a big 'H' on the chest of its older cousin, *Quake*. This is a first-person hack 'em off with balls as well as a big chopper.

Publisher:

Activision (01895 456700)



FADE TO BLACK (94)

The unofficial sequel to the excellent *Flashback*, this is a near-perfect blend of third-person exploration and combat action. The technical precursor to the fantastic *Tomb Raider*, it's a classic in its own right.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



DUKE NUKEM 3D (93)

The debate rages on, and there are still an awful lot of people who rate *Duke* over *Quake*. It's not as technically impressive, but brags gameplay by the bucketload in one-player mode and when played over a network.

Publisher:

Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)



PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING (94)

The ultimate mix of space combat, *Elite*-style trading and FMV action, *Privateer 2* was the first big budget release from Origin to use live action in a positive way. Packed with stars, this is pukka stuff.

Publisher:

Origin/EA (01753 549442)



MAGIC CARPET 2 (92)

The original wooed us with its speed and smoothness – this is even better, with new night-time bits, monsters and a very useful on-line help system. Technically exquisite, the game engine's yet to be bettered.

Publisher:

Bullfrog/EA (01753 549442)



TIE FIGHTER (94)

Still rated by many as the finest space combat sim ever released, it successfully blends all the kudos of *Star Wars* with a wicked new engine for super-fast *TIE* on *X-Wing* stickcuffs.

Publisher:

LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY (88)

Wing Prophecy is far more linear than *Privateer 2*, but still packs an almighty gaming punch in the groilles with its stunning sci-fi blasting action, dazzling special effects and ever-twisting storyline.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



Driving



CARMAGEDDON (95)

Awesome arcade-style racer that's heavy on the hit 'n' run and gameplay. Loads of different cars to choose from, plenty of tracks, three ways to play and a fab multi-player network mode make this one of the most entertaining driving games ever.

Publisher:
SCI (0171 585 3308)



NASCAR RACING 2 (92)

A worthy upgrade featuring a new, smoother 3D engine, improved opponent AI, more controllable cars, a simple single-screen car set-up and a multi-player network option. The constant stream of headset messages adds atmosphere. A racing sim fan's must.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)



NETWORK O RAC RALLY (94)

The seminal rally racer from Europress is the ultimate in skiddy, slidey action. 27 (count 'em) stages, loads of cars, a fantastic eight-way network option and varied terrain and conditions make this superior to the limited *Sega Rally*. Go buy it!

Publisher:
Europress Software (01625 859444)



GRAND THEFT AUTO (92)

This is the game that took over from *Carmageddon* as the media's favourite pet hate. Steal cars, dodge police, mow down pedestrians and cause mayhem in city streets in one of the most addictive driving games ever. *Micro Machines* on acid.

Publisher:
BMG (0171 973 0011)



MICRO MACHINES 2 (93)

The console classic is converted to the PC as new tracks provide a new challenge. The easy-to-use control system means it's user-friendly for the uninitiated. This version comes with a track designer.

Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)



F1 97 (92)

The long-awaited sequel to the excellent PlayStation conversion proved to be worth the wait, with improved driver AI, lush graphics, a split-screen mode and more ludicrous commentary from Murray Walker.

Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)



F1 RACING SIMULATION (93)

The sheer depth of realism is what makes *F1 Racing Sim* such an outstanding experience to play. Not only that, but it looks an absolute treat too – especially 3Dfx-ed up. A Crammond-beater.

Publisher:
Ubi Soft (0181 944 9000)



SCREAMER RALLY (91)

The *Screamer* games just get better. This is by far the best version, with its mad undulating tracks and high-speed courses. As well as 3Dfx support and network play, there's also a split-screen option.

Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 (92)

The amazing sequel to the greatest F1 driving sim ever. Updated brilliantly for the 94/95 season with all-new detailed circuits, cars and teams. Ninja Pentium needed to run the hi-res mode – but it's still great.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



ULTIM@TE RACE PRO (88)

This is quite possibly one of the slickest arcade racers we've ever seen. The handling of the cars might be a little erratic, but the game itself is tremendous fun, especially in deathmatch mode over a LAN.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

Sports



LINKS LS (94)

The classic golf sim gets an update, and unsurprisingly it's fab. There's more options, luscious graphics, a redesigned menu and a view selection system. There's even a built-in upgrader for all the old data disk courses you splashed out on.

Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)



PRO PINBALL: TIMESHOCK! (91)

Remember *Pro Pinball: The Web*? This, the second table in the series, is better in every way. Improved ball dynamics, detail and sound effects, and of course there's the return of the world's dirtiest computer game voice telling you to "Lock those balls".

Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



NHL 98 (94)

Another year, another *NHL*, but this one isn't just the best ice hockey game, it's one of the best sports games we've ever seen. Super 3Dfx-ed graphics, fantastic animation and awesome presentation make this a sports title not to be missed.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



VIRTUAL POOL 2 (90)

Okay, so *Virtual Pool 2* scored one per cent less than its predecessor, but this follow-up beats it hands down. 3Dfx support goes some way to pushing the series further, and the inclusion of English Pub rules make it a more essential purchase than before.

Publisher:
Interplay (01628 423666)



PGA TOUR PRO (94)

Nothing really distinguishes this version from the last, except for the brilliant and very easy to use Internet play facility. Waste no time, go and thwack some Americans now. Your country needs you.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



ACTUA SOCCER 2 (90)

Instantly accessible footie action in this latest instalment of Gremlin's high profile *Actua* series. Great graphics, easy control and a hidden Super Furry Animals team confirm *Actua 2*'s 'must have' status.

Publisher:
Gremlin Interactive (01142 753423)



NBA LIVE 98 (93)

With even better graphics and commentary than before, it's one of the best-looking PC sports games. This version sports 'realistic' faces and players of different heights – it's by far the best basketball game available.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



THE GOLF PRO (90)

If you're bored with either *PGA* or *Links*, then this is the best of the 'mouse-swing' bunch. Good course design and excellent tuition means loads of gameplay, though the putting lets it down a tad.

Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS 97 (92)

This game doesn't quite better *Super Tennis* on the SNES, but it's as close as you'll get on the PC. The simple control system means it's instantly playable, but we may as well tell you now that the women's skirts still don't fly up when they serve.

Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)



MADDEN NFL 98 (87)

This latest PC incarnation is well up to the quality seen on the console versions, with all the features and slick presentation we now expect as standard for an EA Sports release. When it comes down to it, it doesn't really get any better than this.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)

Adventures



ALONE IN THE DARK 3 (95)

Better than the previous *AITD* instalments, *Alone 3* is a tense, ambient tale of Navajo Indian magic and reincarnation that unfolds in the usual *AITD* manner. Now available as part of a compilation budget pack.

Publisher:

Infogrames (0181 738 8199)



INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS (93)

Follow a post-*Raiders* Indy in his search for the submerged metropolis. Three ways to play make for a high replayability factor, and the inter-character banter is brilliant.

Publisher:

LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



BIOFORGE (95)

Futuristic *Alone In The Dark*-style game with impressive graphics, puzzles and soundtrack. Often preferred over *AITD* games as its unique blend of arcade combat is explosive. The only drag is EA's refusal to make a sequel for it.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



LBA 2: TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY (93)

Twinsen, the sprite with the egg-shaped head, is back – this time to thwart those pesky Esmer in this sumptuous sequel. The huge play area, coupled with seamlessly linked puzzles, creates a great looking and atmospheric adventure.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



SYSTEM SHOCK (95)

This futuristic first-person cyberpunk adventure from the makers of *Ultima* was initially overlooked by many people. Now available on budget, this is a must-buy for those new to the game. The graphics might be a little dated, but the atmosphere is invigorating.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



SAM & MAX (93)

Steve Purcell's hilarious dog/rabbit 'freelance police' duo's first and only PC outing, in which they need to solve a host of bizarre puzzles. An all-talkie adventure with a gag-laden script, this is an essential budget-priced purchase even if you're not a massive point-and-click fan.

Publisher:

LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



STAR TREK TNG: A FINAL UNITY (94)

A style oozier. At times it's as if you're inside a *Star Trek: TNG* episode. Non-linear and beautifully presented, it's a Trek-head must-buy. Yet to be bettered.

Publisher:

MicroProse (01454 893893)



THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND (92)

The third game in LucasArts' classic *Monkey* saga delivers the goods big-time, much to the relief of adventure fans everywhere.

Publisher:

VIE (0171 368 2255)



DISCWORD II (93)

Perfect Entertainment's immaculate sequel to *Discworld* follows would-be wizard Rincewind in his search for the Grim Reaper. Not as hard as the first game, but bigger and better looking. *Discworld II* is a universally appealing adventure game.

Publisher:

Psychosis (0151 282 3000)



ECSTATICA II (90)

We dubbed it "An adventure with balls". It's hard, but it's one of the most rewarding adventures that we've ever seen. It constantly surprises and is sure to keep even the most battle-weary adventure fan busy for weeks.

Publisher:

Psychosis (0151 282 3000)

Role-Playing Games



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD 2: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS (94)

This improves on almost every aspect of its prequel, *The Stygian Abyss*. You explore a complex, ever-evolving dungeon; it has unsurpassed atmosphere and interaction.

Publisher:

Origin/EA (01753 549442)



DIABLO (88)

Standard hack 'n' slash fare, but pulled off with such style that it's addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game.

Publisher:

Zabrac/Blizzard (01626 332233)



REALMS OF THE HAUNTING (93)

Although overlooked by many fans of the genre, our Mallo gave it a whopping 93 per cent when he reviewed it back in issue 47. Still well worth a look if you happen to see it going cheap, *ROTH* is a well cool mix of adventure and RPG.

Publisher:

Grenlin Interactive (01142 753423)



TERRIS (88)

A MUD in the old-school style of text-based RPGs, but it's so addictive that we're still playing it. The various quests, puzzles and monsters will keep you going for days. The gameplay is excellent, if you can handle the 'texty-ness'.

Publisher:

AOL (0800 279 7444)



LANDS OF LORE: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY (92)

Four long years in the making, Westwood Studios' mammoth new adventure proved more than worth the wait. Sumptuous visuals and a tremendous atmosphere combine to make *Lands Of Lore* an undeniable instant classic.

Publisher:

VIE (0171 368 2255)



MERIDIAN 59 (86)

This ground-breaking on-line role-playing game allows thousands of people to interact with each other in the same fantasy universe at the same time. Gansh and horrible graphics aside, *Meridian 59* remains one of the best on-line multi-player RPGs around.

Publisher:

3DO Company (0181 296 1949)



FALLOUT (91)

This surprised everyone in the office who played it, and proved to be both very addictive and well conceived. Not quite on a par with the mighty *Ultima* series, but then what is?

Publisher:

Interplay (01628 423666)



RAVENLOFT: STONE PROPHET (78)

Better than SSI's previous AD&D *Ravenloft* RPGs. You have to battle through a landscape populated by stone golems and scorpions. Average graphics, but the intuitive spell/combat system is a joy.

Publisher:

Mindscape (01444 246333)



ULTIMA VII (89)

Arguably the best of all the *Ultima* games, *Ultima VII* blends character interaction and the exploration of the world of Britannia. The last *Ultima* series to give complete party control. Check out the *Ultima Collection* for a real treat.

Publisher:

Origin/EA (01753 549442)



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS (PRE-PC ZONE)

This took role-playing games away from first-person tile-based RPGs. Amazing architecture, witty characterisations, layers of storyline and the best ending of any game in history.

Publisher:

Origin/EA (01753 549442)

Strategy



DUNGEON KEEPER (96)

A game with a genre almost impossible to define, *DK* takes *SimCity 2000*, *C&C* and *Ultima Underworld* and remoulds them into one hell of a title. Fantastic gameplay, and a lifespan on a par with the Queen Mother.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

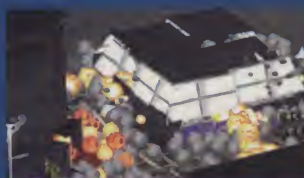


INCUBATION (94)

Deeply atmospheric turn-based strategy game with graphics to die for. This is a welcome change from the endless stream of *C&C* clones and is as challenging as it's action-packed.

Publisher:

Blue Byte (01604 232200)



SYNDICATE WARS (95)

One of the best strategy games of all time gets a sequel, and what a fabulous sequel it is too. It houses a wealth of intricate levels, gorgeous graphics and enough gratuitous violence to keep anyone happy.

Publisher:

EA/Bullfrog (01753 549442)



AGE OF EMPIRES (94)

Think of *Civilization 2*. Imagine the same great empire-building gameplay, some excellent graphical touches and comprehensive multi- and single-player options (all in real time). That's *Age Of Empires* in a nutshell.

Publisher:

Microsoft (0345 002000)



X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE (95)

A revamped engine and a healthy helping of real-time combat have brought the fantastically addictive *X-COM* series bang up to date. If you like your strategy games deep and meaningful, you should buy *X-COM 3* immediately. It'll keep you busy for weeks.

Publisher:

MicroProse (01454 893893)



SIMCITY 2000 (92)

A classic game that deserves its reputation as one of the all-time greats in the strategy world. Build and maintain the city of your dreams and cope with all the problems a real-life Mayor would come up against. It's a lot more fun than it sounds, trust us.

Publisher:

Maxis (0171 505 1500)



COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT (94)

...or *C&C* in SVGA with a few new units. It's a testament to the original's gameplay that the sequel can get away with adding few new features and still be fun to play.

Publisher:

VIE (0171 368 2255)



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 97/98 (90)

The best football management game ever gets its seasonal update and a few added extras – you can now play a number of leagues simultaneously, and change stats.

Publisher:

Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)



PUZZLE BOBBLE (94)

We can't agree exactly where *Puzzle Bobble* fits – should it go in here, with the *Civs* and *Sims* of the PC gaming world, or in the action section? But it most certainly deserves to be in our Recommends section. Totally absorbing and addictive.

Publisher:

GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)



CIVILIZATION 2 (90)

Explore the world, conquer territories and research new technologies in one of the most successful strategy games ever. It's not that different to the first one, but it merits a '90s update and a place here.

Publisher:

MicroProse (01454 893893)

Flight Simulations



FLIGHT SIM 98 (94)

Another year, and yet another flight sim from the mighty Microsoft. However, this time, with two new aircraft, a helicopter, hundreds of new airports and impressive 3D acceleration, it's really worth having.

Publisher:

Microsoft (0345 002000)



COMANCHE 3 (92)

This latest version is the finest we've seen, sporting juicy terrain graphics due to a revamped VoxelSpace engine. Despite an accurate flight model, it delivers intense gameplay, and is extremely good fun.

Publisher:

NovaLogic (0171 405 1777)



F-22 ADF (93)

DID do it again with this awesome new combat sim that leaves the competition firmly on the ground. Graphics and control to die for, it only really lacks a decent campaign. The *Total Air War* add-on pack will make it near perfect.

Publisher:

Ocean/DID (0161 832 6633)



JETFIGHTER III (91)

The follow-up to one of the most popular sims ever. Fly over three and a half million square miles of accurately-mapped terrain of South America. It really is just like being there. Oh yeah, you get to shoot things too, but sadly there's no duty free option.

Publisher:

Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)



Longbow 2 (92)

"*Longbow 2* is challenging, beautiful, exciting and fun – if you're 3Dfx'd up," we said in our review (issue 59). If you don't have any extra graphics hardware, there's only one thing to do – think 'upgrade', 'upgrade' and 'upgrade'. It'll be worth the investment.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



A-10 CUBA! (90)

Functional graphics for a game that really does capture the imagination, mainly because the plane is an absolute joy to fly. Although it's slightly limited due to a lack of a fully-fledged campaign it's still great fun, as well as being pretty speedy on a modest Pentium.

Publisher:

Activision (01895 456700)



US MARINE FIGHTERS (92)

Lovely graphics and a realistic enough flight model. Originally released as a mission disk for *US Navy Fighters*, this now comes as part of the *US Navy Fighters Gold* pack, so go get that instead!

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



F/A-18 KOREA (90)

Any game that allows you to nuke cities comes highly recommended, especially when you add super-smooth graphics, and a comprehensive mission editor. Not the best, but definitely worth a look.

Publisher:

Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



FLYING CORPS (92)

Action-packed WWI flight simulation with neat graphics. Some of you may recall *Red Baron* as one of the greatest WWI flight sims ever – this improves on the old classic to become the best PC WWI sim currently available.

Publisher:

Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



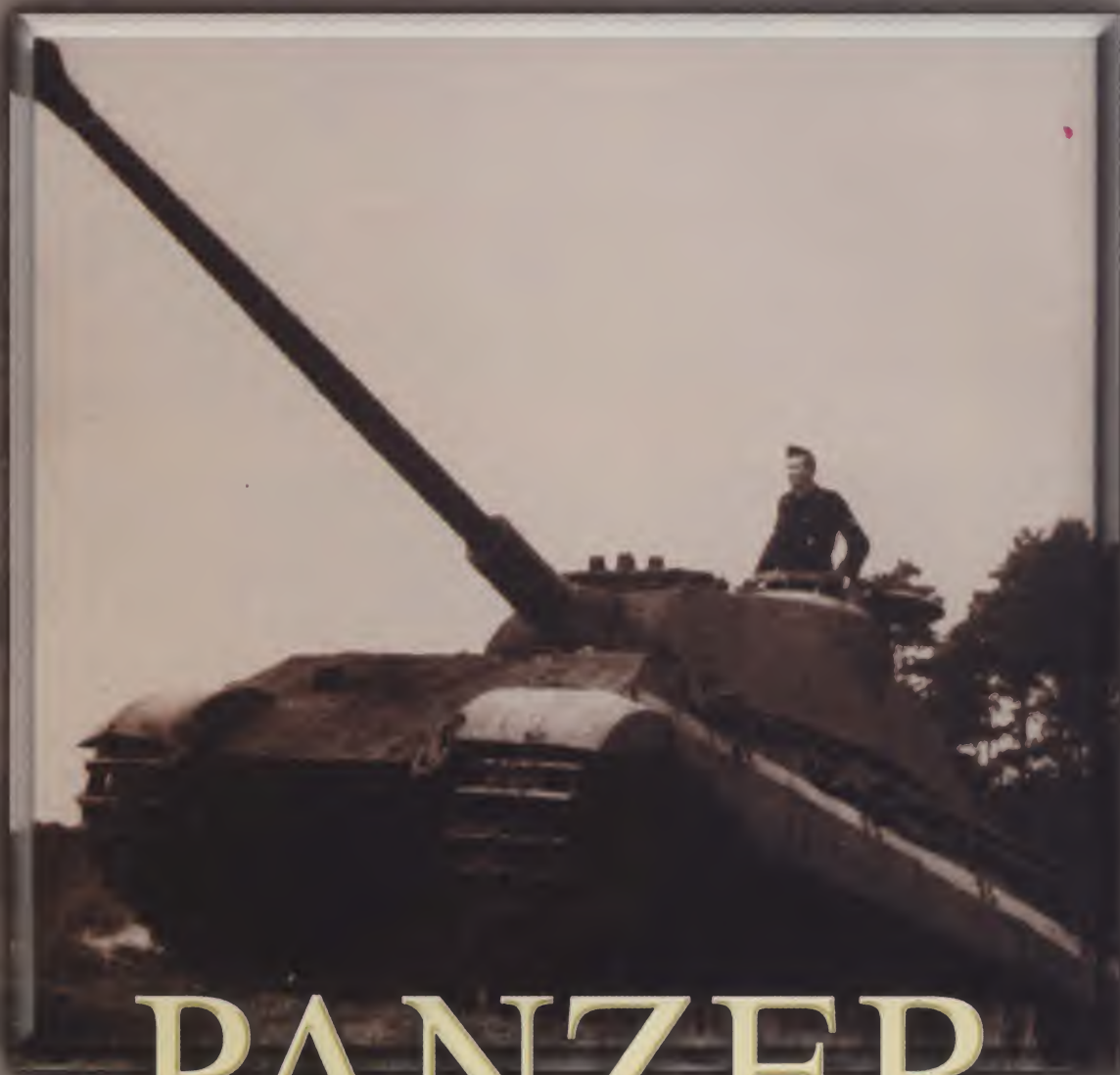
FLIGHT UNLIMITED II (84)

It can't really compete with the behemoth that is *Flight Sim 98*, and as a result is somewhat limited and claustrophobic. However, it does score highly for being more detailed in its smaller area, and much more fun.

Publisher:

Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)

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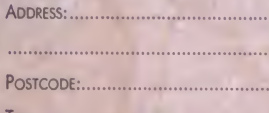
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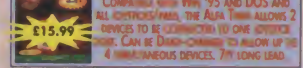
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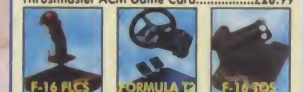
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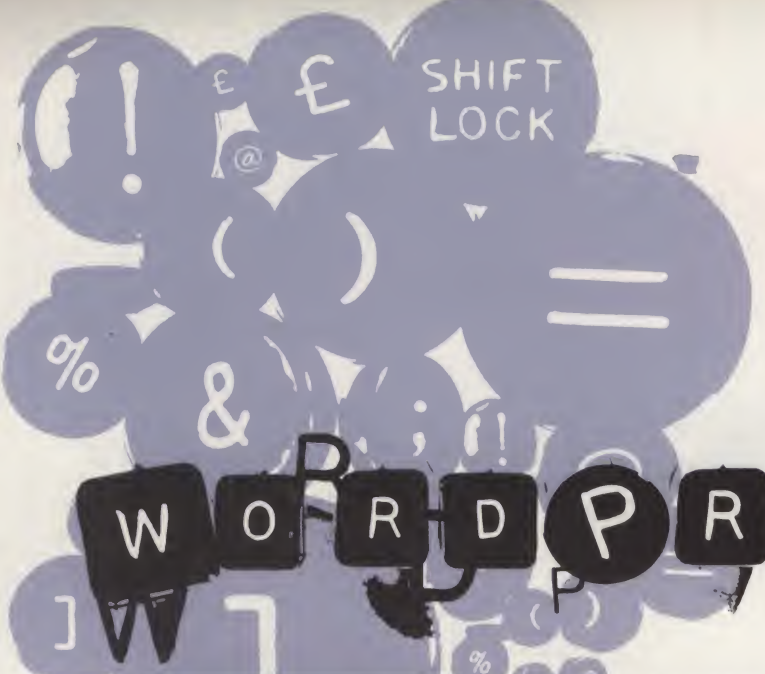
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Are we fighting a war against censorship? Do we have a downer on Liverpoolians? Do we have deals with software houses? No, no and no respectively, answers Jeremy Wells. So calm down.



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WHAT A BARGAIN!

Hello! Firstly, keep up a great job with the magazine. I think it's the best of the lot. Just a quick criticism of your website: namely that your prices are inaccurate. For example, you say *Quake II* costs £39.95 (or whatever), and I purchased the same game from Curry's for only £29.99. What's the deal?

AWSM, e-mail

We try to keep our website as up to date as possible, but prices are changing all the time. When *Quake II* was released, its RRP was £39.95, so that's the price we quoted in our review, and consequently that's what's on the website. Most games are discounted by retailers as soon as they're released, so always hunt around for the best deal.

MULTI-PLAYER BLUES

How long is it going to take for you to get your multi-player section up and running again? Please, please hurry, as all other servers are utter shite. Also, are you going to do a Troubleshooter guide on *Blade Runner*, as I am hopelessly stuck? I have just shot the female rep in the club and there is a warrant out for my arrest. I have been everywhere I can go and all I can do is shoot rats.

Lee Walker, e-mail

Our multi-player site is on hold at the moment. If you're gagging for some multi-player action, we suggest you check out *BT's Wireplay* (see p122) for a speedy *Quake II* connection. Check out this month's cover-mounted tips book for help with *Blade Runner*.

THE ULTIMATE GAMES MACHINE

I was delighted to read your piece on emulators last issue. It brought so many fond memories flooding back. As a Spectrum owner myself, I have long been searching for a way to play *Jet Set Willy* again (having broken the computer by plugging the joystick in). As I do indeed have a copy of the original game, is it true, as you suggest in your 'It's the law' box, that I can legally download it?

Laurie, e-mail



Play *Jet Set Willy* on your PC.

blinked a blue screen then went back to normal. I pondered on this, and then my mind twisted around the idea that it was a subliminal message. Feeling kind of unsure, I watched for a short while, and then there, clear as day, was a turquoise screen with black writing on it. Third time I saw it, I finally read the words "PLAY DUNGEON KEEPER". Well, that was the final straw. I e-mailed Bullfrog, and they gave me a reply two days (yes, two days!) later saying: "Oh no, no subliminal message." I was most annoyed, so I wrote to you.

You probably think I'm mad. What's more, Bullfrog will probably have edited the screensaver or taken it off their site by the time anyone reads this. But if anyone wants the one I've got installed on my machine (with the message included), just e-mail me at crummy@globalnet.co.uk and decide for yourself. Don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to destroy Bullfrog – they are an excellent company – but the truth must be known.

**John Noel, AKA Mercurius,
e-mail**

As it stands, if you own a copy of the game then you are legally allowed to play it. The law isn't exactly very helpful as far as the Internet and copyright issues go, although if you've got a copy of the game and sent off the registration card then you are legally covered.

SPOOKY GOINGS ON

This is a small story about those jokers at Bullfrog. I am an avid gamer (hey, I'm only 14, but anyway). Surfing the Net about a week ago, I came across the excellent Bullfrog site and their *Dungeon Keeper* theme pack. I waited around an hour to download the large file, and set it all up, and was pretty pleased with it. Until one Tuesday afternoon (day off school)... I was watching the 'Torture' screensaver, when it glitched. It

We spoke to Bullfrog, and they sheepishly refused to comment on these mysterious events. However, we've heard on the grapevine that while developing the title, the programmers built in some kind of weird calendar that causes strange things to happen to your PC when there's a



full moon and on certain pagan holidays. If anyone else experiences strange goings on, then we'll need hard evidence (screenshots, for example) to take to Bullfrog. The truth is out there!

DRIVING ME ROUND THE BEND

I'm not going to drool over *Quake II* or any of the other 3Dfx games that are out at the moment, as so many of your letters do. I'm not even going to throw bucketloads of praise over your editorials, as many other letters do. I'm not even going to complain about the amount of hardware needed to run today's games. The thing I am going to complain about is the versions of drivers that manufacturers ship with their peripherals. Why is it that after installing new hardware, or even some software, I usually have to spend about an hour on the Web downloading 10Mb files to fix versions of drivers that don't actually work with the hardware that has been supplied? The support from websites is usually quite reasonable, but trying to get support from the shops that sell the products is a waste of time. Surely shops would have many more satisfied customers if they supplied updated versions of software drivers as and when they became available, instead of selling the original 1.0.0 versions as supplied by the manufacturers, which are usually so buggy as to be worthless. Some of the best drivers seem to come from the longer established companies such as Epson. Some of the worst support comes from Semantic. I recently downloaded the trial version of Norton AntiVirus 4.0 for Windows 95. This all worked fine until I had to restore my registry. After that it gives me a security alert every time I start it, which I cannot get rid of. Support? Ha! Go to the website. All you get is a number to ring in the States – no UK support and no Web support. How do they expect to sell products?!

Steve Halliwell, e-mail

Keeping your system up to date is an absolute nightmare for most PC owners, which is why we try to include as many patches and drivers as possible on our cover CD (see last month's issue). Unfortunately, space on the CD is often at a premium and we can't cater for everybody. It's pretty clear that after-sales support is pretty poor overall, and if you're not on-line then you're stuck. We'll be looking into this area over the next couple of months, so if anyone else has any complaints, drop us a line and

Letter of the Month

DO GROW UP!

It seems *PC Zone* has been waging – almost single-handedly at times – a war against censorship of video games, especially by the BBFC. However, I feel this is misplaced. I really don't think the games industry has acted well enough to deserve a campaign on its behalf. Don't get me wrong, I'm not a stuffy middle-aged *Mail* reader (I'm 18 and never touch the *Mail*), nor am I new to computer games and shocked by what I see (I've been playing games ever since the 8-bit days). I just feel that the games industry needs to do a fair bit of growing up before it can expect to be treated the same as the movie industry.

In the last issue of *PC Zone* there was an advert for *GTA* (which, incidentally, is a great game and shouldn't need such cheap tricks to sell it) celebrating – celebrating! – the fact that it had earned an 18 certificate. Really, is this the action of a mature industry? When was the last time you saw a film celebrating getting an 18? Equally, does anyone else find the fact that the makers of *Postal* are fighting tooth and claw any form of censorship, even mild censorship, while running adverts selling their mediocre excuse for a game as "the game they tried to ban", a tad hypocritical?

It seems ridiculous that games designers can create games like *Postal*, whose sole purpose seems to be to shock, and then accuse those who are shocked of "missing the point". I think the only people missing the point are the game designers themselves. If the games industry wants to be treated like a mature, sensible group, then they have to act like one (God, I sound like my father). That means no more games simply revolving around violence (such as *Postal* or some of the crap *Quake* clones); no more 'shock' adverts with bulls' testicles or scantily clad, out-of-work models in them; no more sad tag lines like "mindless violence, it's really great!"; and, most importantly, no more Lara Croft wannabes. You can't expect the BBFC to concentrate on gameplay when so many games designers don't.

Ultimately, when the games industry stops producing and marketing all its products with sad, spotty 14-year-olds who play all their games one-handed in mind, then maybe groups like the BBFC and MPs will stop assuming they are the only people who play games.

Paul Louis, e-mail

*PC Zone isn't fighting a war against censorship, we'd just like to see games treated with the same integrity as other forms of entertainment. It's apparently okay to make a film about stealing cars, but you can't release a game that places the player in the role of a joyrider without expecting some kind of media outcry. Like most gamers, we're not into violence for the sake of it, nor do we appreciate shock-tactic advertisements, we just want to play the games as their creators intended. We totally panned *Postal* because we thought it was terrible, but by the same token we campaigned to put the gore back into *Carmageddon*. Some publishers do seem to court controversy, and unfortunately it makes a mockery of the whole situation. What do the rest of you think?*

If your letter is selected as Letter of the Month we'll send you a bundle of T-shirts and maybe even a game as well. Cool!

we'll compile a list of the ten worst culprits. Then we'll try to do something about it.

FREE GAMES!

In the March issue of *PC Zone*, Russ Michaels wrote to you asking for free games. This is obviously a ludicrous thing to ask for, but Sierra are 'giving away' *Betrayal At Krondor* – all you have to do is download it from their website! Check out www.sierra.com for more info.

David Dyer, e-mail



Get *Betrayal At Krondor* and *Red Baron* for free from Sierra.

Thanks for the tip, David. It's good that publishers are now freeing up old software and sticking it on the Net for people to play. Thumbs aloft to Sierra. If any other readers have found any 'free' games, please let us know and we'll print the URLs.

CALM DOWN! CALM DOWN!

Comments like 'All scousers are thieves?' Moustachioed, wigged-up Barrys and Terrys? Well, I never thought I'd see the day when *PC Zone* would have to steal 'jokes' from Harry 'two-sketch' Enfield. Next time you take the piss out of Liverpool, at least try something that hasn't been the staple diet of light entertainment and marketing tossers for the last ten years. If I wanted to see this sort of shit I'd buy the *Sun* and watch 'classic' Carla Lane sitcoms.

Pap Taylor, e-mail

PS: The city's not just like *Brookside*, either.

Touched a nerve there, did we? In case you didn't notice, our feature on Liverpool developers *Rage* also took a slightly irreverent stereotypical view of Birmingham and London, and so far we haven't had any complaints from irate Brummies or Londoners. It was even *Rage's* idea to don the wigs. Who said Liverpoolians had a great sense of humour?

We did our best and tried really hard to get Cilla Black to don the wig, but she refused.





THOSE WEREN'T THE DAYS...

The return of *Sentinel* seems to have generated some morbid curiosity in old computer games, though God knows why. Gamers who've been brought up on a PC ought to thank their lucky stars and stay well away from the unadulterated shite us poor buggers had to live with in the old days. However, if curiosity gets the better of you and you really must know what it was like, then you really should get an old machine and do it properly. A few sessions on a Sinclair Speccy or a Commodore 64 should knock some sense into you! Sample the delights of loading from a tape deck – this can take about 15 minutes for a game with many levels. Quite often, having waited all this time, the game will crash or lock immediately, leaving you to rewind and start again. If you're playing on Sunday morning, and every housewife in the district puts the dinner on at the same time, you'll lose everything and have to start again.

For an added sense of authenticity, remember that you have to be plugged into the telly, so when the time comes for *Corrie* it could mean a family argument or the end of *Mission Impossible*. Also, bear in mind that most old tape games couldn't be saved, which meant that unless you spent your entire summer holidays with the computer switched on you'll never pass the first three levels. I often left my 64 on over the weekend (sad bastard) but still never saw the end of anything. Sometimes, 'cheats' that could help were published in magazines. Unfortunately they took about an hour to type in and usually crashed immediately because of a printing error.

But I digress! The point I'm trying to make is that we've never had it so good. Old games were (and are) generally crap. Although some programmers made imaginative use of the tiny memory available, a lot of the software was unplayable, uninteresting, and designed to dupe the average punter. The imagery on the packaging quite often bore no resemblance at all to the appalling graphics in the game. That is why, to this day, I would never buy a game

that I have not seen reviewed in PC Zone. Maybe I'm being a little harsh. Some games were great, but they are all pants when compared with the graphical splendour of *Tomb Raider* or *Flying Corps*. One day, I walked into a shop and saw a demo of *Doom* and I saw the light. I threw my Commodore in the bin and bought a PC. As far as I'm concerned, anyone who wants to play old computer games needs sterilising with a pair of old pliers. Still, you can't tell some people.

Lou Moore, e-mail

BUT THEY WERE GREAT DAYS

I think it's rather harsh to berate the Spectrum for some of the things it gets accused of. All the recent articles say things like, "The Speccy had only 16k and a rubber keyboard, and the games were actually shite. It's only nostalgia that makes them seem good. And you had to sit there for ten minutes waiting for the games to load..." Yes, the original Speccy had a rubber keyboard, but neither the 48k nor any 128k version did. And everyone forgets the 128k Spectrums now anyway. Sure, the colour clash was pretty dreadful, but to say Speccy games were crap is just plain stupid. *Manic Miner* was shite, but *Myth*, *Chaos*, *Castle Master* and *Carrier Command* were all brilliant (I still play *Chaos* regularly). And the *Freescape* (ie *Castle Master* etc) games had a more advanced 3D engine than *Doom* (except they were monochrome. And there were no texture maps. And they ran slowly. And the sound was crap. But you could look up and down and have multiple levels and stuff). So stop being so cruel to the Speccy. The gameplay was great, it really was. And although the graphics and sound were crap, with 128k Speccys they weren't that crap. Well, not really. And lessons learnt from the Speccy can be applied to the PC. Paul Presley had the right idea in his 'Those were the days' article. Let's have Julian Gollop writing *Chaos 2000*, and stuff like that.

A very nostalgic
Andy Patrick, Bath

It's true that playing games today is a lot less hassle than ten years ago, but then we didn't know any better. Everybody has a few golden gaming moments that will stay with them forever. But let's not get too sentimental and misty-eyed. A few minutes

spent with some of the 'classics' featured in our emulator feature in the March issue should be enough to convince most people that they've never had it so good.

WHERE'S FALLOUT?

After reading your rave review of *Fallout* in the March issue, I decided to go out and purchase the game on the basis that I have come to trust your judgement when it comes to reviewing games. I saw the release date you published which said it was 'out now', so I toured around the shops trying to find it. Did I find it? Bollocks. The game was nowhere in sight! After hunting high and low I decided to ring Interplay and ask them when it was going to be released. And lo and behold there is no official release date. All I was told was that it would be released at the end of March. They were not sure. I am a subscriber to your brilliant magazine, so I received my copy of the March edition around February 23. How can you review a piece of software and state that it is 'out now' when in fact there is not even an official release date set yet? This is not the only time this has happened. The same thing happened with *X-COM 3*. It was reviewed in your magazine months before it was released, and when it was released it had quotes from your review plastered all over the box. Do you have some sort of deal with software houses that you review an incomplete version of the game months before a release date so you can have advertising on their boxes?

Andy Hamilton, e-mail

In an effort to keep up to date we will often review games that are 'gold', as the lead time between a review being written and the mag going on sale can sometimes be as long as six weeks. Interplay gave us a 'gold' disc (final code that's ready for mastering) in time for the March issue, which we reviewed

as normal. Sometimes a game is held back because of mastering problems, compatibility issues or new bugs being reported (sometimes by ourselves) – any one of these factors may cause a game to slip and be released at a later date. We have no deals with software houses, it's just that sometimes, for whatever reason, a game takes longer to master, and ends up in the shops later than predicted. As to when a game will be released, we do our utmost to get the dates right, but can only relay what a publisher tells us at the time we go to press.



As this screenshot shows, *SimCity 3000* won't be 3D.

2D OR NOT 2D? THAT IS THE QUESTION

I have just heard that *SimCity 3000* will no longer be fully three-dimensional! Maxis have apparently claimed that the average PC isn't powerful enough to handle this type of 3D navigation, and so changed it back to shitty 2D sprites. Tell me this is not true!

Tom Marchant, e-mail

PS: *Carmageddon II* is looking absolutely fab. Keep printing screenshots as soon as you get them.

From what we've seen, *SimCity 3000* will not sport a fully rotational 3D engine (like *Syndicate Wars* and *Myth*). Like *Westwood*, it appears that Maxis feel that in opting for a spanking new 3D engine they would be forced to compromise too much of the gameplay. We'll let you know what we think when we get our hands on some code. Yes, *Carmageddon II* does look like being a prime candidate for sequel of the year. Be assured that we'll print more shots as soon as we get them.



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Do computer games make you fat? Or is it just Steve Hill?

You fat bastard

THE UPRIGHT DENIZENS OF THIS FINE nation have long derided computer games as the devil's spawn, blaming them for everything from the warping of young minds to the escalating crime rate and the price of whisky. And clearly they're right. I mean, you can hardly walk the streets these days without being shot in the teeth with a nail-gun, run off the road by a futuristic vehicle or forced to swallow a gigantic revolving power-up. In the words of Bernard Manning, "It's a f**king disgrace".

But beneath the sensationalist, ill-informed, wildly inaccurate, reactionary, knee-jerk, tabloid-filling nonsense, does there lurk a more sinister subtext? Do games turn you into a lard-arse? Are we becoming a nation of sloths, with exercise limited to merely sliding a mouse around and pressing a few keys? A recent report in the US periodical *Pediatrics* blames computer games for the increase in child obesity.

In the olden days, free time was spent kicking a pig's bladder around a muddy field in a vague assimilation of the game of football, an activity with far greater heritage than computer gaming. Nowadays though, weekends are more likely to be spent in a darkened room, grappling with a joystick, attempting to come to terms with the intricacies of the latest incarnation of *Actua* or *FIFA*. An honourable activity indeed, but one more likely to yield a generation of photototropic, bloated weaklings than the next Alan Shearer.

As an extreme example, the last time I attempted a vaguely competitive game of football I shattered both arms within 30 seconds of taking the field. A

promising career was cut short, and I am now forced to live out my footballing fantasies via the magic of interactive entertainment.

According to my charming colleagues, this inactivity has led to an increase in my body weight, and howls of "Fatboy Hill" interspersed with hilarious calorie-based jokes. At this point I would like to clarify that I am merely a few pounds over my fighting weight, and normal service will be resumed in time for the summer when I take up my annual stint as a lifeguard on Bournemouth beach. Besides, I don't sweat much for a fat lad.

But in all seriousness, it is a potential problem. Sat twitching in front of a screen while filling your face with soft drinks, pies, pizzas and cakes does not make for a svelte figure. Admittedly I'm not quite at the stage where the front wall of my house has to be removed, but there are some people within the




"According to my charming colleagues, this inactivity has led to an increase in body weight, and calls of 'Fatboy Hill'."

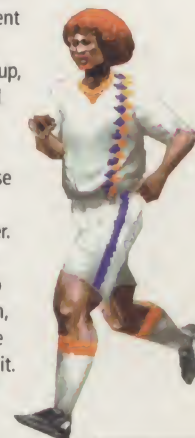
games industry who aren't far off. We visit a lot of developers in the course of an issue, and some of these guys are enormous, particularly those in America.

The same can be said of hard-core games players, and this is a side effect of effectively living virtual lives. In 1968, Californian pop duo Zager & Evans scored a freak Number One hit with a song entitled 'In The Year 2525'. A catchy number, it painted a bleak vision of a future in which mankind had become dependent on machines, physically debilitated and with little concept of the outside world. A quick look around the office would appear to offer a few prophetically worrying signs, with the majority of staff red of eye and pale of skin. Mallo permanently sports a thousand-yard stare; Chris boasts the complexion of Nosferatu; Jeremy

actually believes that he is the manager of Arsenal; and Richie is inert. Paul 'Archmage' Presley can be found hovering on a cloud somewhere in Shepherd's Bush, Macca actually lives in a *Quake* level, and Charlie seems to be in a permanent state of bewilderment.

Games can screw you up, as anyone who has found themselves mentally replaying sections in a tortured insomnia malaise will testify.

Pull yourselves together. It's time to lay down your keyboard and get out into the real world. Then again, there are people out there who can hurt you. Forget it. Cheer up, have a pie. 



Switch off your PC and go and do something less boring instead.



LOOKING

BACK



Fitter, happier, more productive? Is the multi-player community ready for total Zonal domination? More to the point, are we ready? **Richie Shoemaker** is quaking in his shoes (which he didn't make himself, by the way).



CONTINGENCY PLANS ARE BEING DRAWN UP and there is a tangible air of apprehension hanging over the heads of those in the *Zone* office at the moment as we all await potential flagellation in the multi-play arena. You will already have seen that we've pinned our colours to the Wireplay mast, so what we must do now is stop the idle boasting and get on with more than a little practice. Is Chris all pants and no trousers when it comes to *Age Of Empires*? Does Macca constantly chew his own pineapple? Time, as they say, will tell.

"If I'd have to tidy up my desk in order to play a golf game, I'd much rather live in filth."

Thankfully, my own *Quake* skills have been seriously misrepresented in the past thanks to Jeremy, so I should at least be able to salvage more than a little respect when carved a new rectum by the regulars down at Wireplay docks. No such luck for Chris, however, who is the deathmatch equivalent of Celine Dion.

Self-appointed *Quake* genius Macca isn't perturbed by the competition out there in Wireplay land: "I have no fear," he proudly remarks. "Though I have been playing with my genitals. And my guitar." (One and the same, methinks.)

Still racking up a good few hours of everyone's multi-player time is *Quake II*. Each of us has finally got to grips with the recently released iD levels, and cruelty-free Charlie Brooker has been downloading a few choice home-grown ones from the Net. Though impressive enough to look at, they're yet to make any serious impact.

Ever since the Cruelty Zoo 'incident', Charlie has been laying low from animal rights activists, and has only recently reappeared with beaming smiles at the response from last month's 'Haranguing...' feature. "I am exonerated, forgiven, without sin," he says. Yep, the boy done good. But you're only as good as your last feature.

Spec Ops: the demo version, admittedly, but it stopped work for a while.



The Golf Pro (left) and *Masters Of The Sith* (right): both with full-frontal movie action.

While on the subject of imposing features, Steve Hill's been setting MicroProse's excellent *Ultimate Race Pro* and Gremlin's *Motorhead* against each other. "*Motorhead* just about wings it," he says with a tear in his eye, while hunched over one of its early levels. (The dark skies obviously remind him of home.) On the MicroProse team, Jeremy thinks the winner may simply come down to price: "The deathmatch arena is great fun, and you can't escape the fact that *Ultimate Race Pro* is half the price."

Like most of us, Jeremy has also been learning the ways of "the force that binds us together" in LucasArts' superb *Jedi* mission disk *Mysteries Of The Sith*. "It's bloody hard," he says. "I'm only on level six and I've been playing it for hours."

And what of *CM2* (he asked knowingly)?

"It's fallen by the wayside, I admit. It's still on my hard drive, but I've been playing other stuff. It was turning into an unhealthy obsession for a while there."

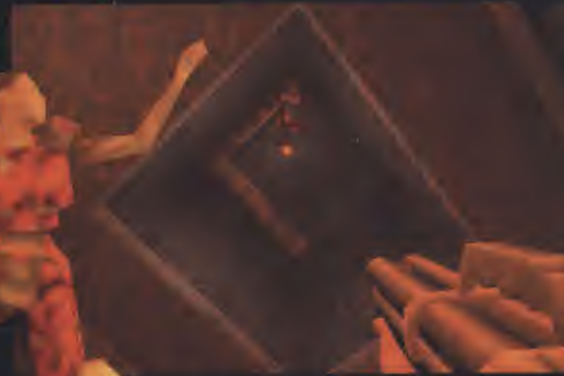
Talking of obsessions, Paul Mallinson has dug up his old friend *Warlords III* and is still finding it extremely challenging. "There aren't enough hours in the day," he sighs. "Not least because I've been messing about with *MAME* (see last month's On-Line) and *Mysteries Of The Sith*."

Lagged by *Zone*'s LA-style crackdown, Mallo is finding things hard going. Not because drug-soliciting ubercrims are peddling their nefarious wares by the communal printer, but because the office has become a 'smeurk'-free zone. Chris '40 lighters a day' Anderson has understandably gone AWOL with a copy of *Black Dahlia* and refuses to return until a small perspex chamber is installed around his desk.

Smoky-voiced archmage Paul Presley has been working his way through *Jedi Knight* before embarking on the mission disk. He's devoted so much time to it that he's forgotten all about DID's *F-22 ADF* and the wondrous world of adventures. He can still be seen on dark nights though, hanging around laylines with his divining rods.

And what of Patrick McCarthy? Well, he's sort of disappeared off the face of the earth. Last we heard he'd had a six-foot long mouse mat made up with which to play *The Golf Pro*. "Desk space is at a premium with this game, but it's worth tidying up for."

My own desk is an appalling mess. But then if I'd have to tidy up in order to play a golf game, I'd much rather live in filth. **2**



CONQUESTS AND CIVILIZATIONS

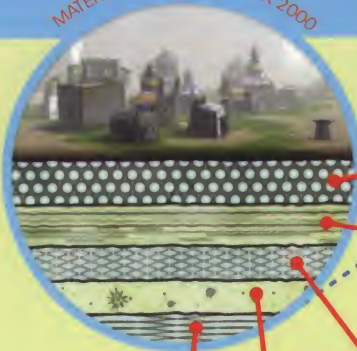
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